This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

1473.48.40

Harvard College
Library

FROM THE BOOKS
IN THE HOMESTEAD OF

Sarah Orne Jewett

AT SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE

BEQUEATHED BY

Theodore Jewett Eastman

A.B. 1901 - M.D. 1905

1931

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 785.

MISS CAREW BY AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL I.

MISS CAREW.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY," ETC.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

21413.48.40

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
THE BEQUEST OF
THEODORE JEWETT EASTMAN
1931

MISS CAREW.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction.

I WAS in love — hopelessly, helplessly, irrationally in love — with Miss Carew.

Hopelessly, of course. How could it be otherwise? I had met her at one or two dinner-parties — I had danced with her at one or two balls — I had bowed to her half a dozen times in the Park. It was the merest acquaintanceship, and nothing more. Had it even been more, what was I, Philip Dundonald, that I should aspire, even in my wildest dreams, to the rich, the beautiful, the brilliant Miss Carew? I might as reasonably have allowed myself to become enamoured of the Venus Milo, or the Madonna della Seggiola.

I was only Philip Dundonald, barrister-at-law; and I had never held a brief in my life. I was the author of an unsuccessful book — of a transpontine drama, the parentage of which I was ashamed to acknowledge — and of a chaos of leaders, light articles, and sensation stories; mere bubbles carried down upon the ever-flowing current of some half-dozen daily and weekly publications. I was as poor

as Romeo's apothecary. Miss Carew was a great heiress. My life was spent in the solution of that curious philosophical experiment by which brains are transmuted into bread. For Miss Carew the world was a huge cake, out of which she picked only the plums. I rented a dingy first-floor overlooking a dusty little organ-haunted square in the heart of that unknown region lying between Pentonville and the British Museum. Miss Carew owned a house in Saville Row, an abbey in Yorkshire, and a villa near Florence. In short, I was as far removed from the sphere in which she lived and had her being, as if I had been an inhabitant of Uranus.

Nevertheless, I loved her. I loved her from the first moment I beheld her; and that was at an evening-party in Mayfair, at precisely twenty-four minutes past ten o'clock on Thursday evening, the twenty-fourth of December, eighteen hundred and sixty-two. I repaired to the party in full possession of all my faculties. I left it a hopeless lunatic, and went to bed that night in my boots.

Thenceforth the universe for me contained only Miss Carew. I dreamt of her; raved of her; wrote sonnets to her; plunged wildly into evening parties, in the hope of meeting her; wore gloves two sizes too small for my hands, and boots that I blush to look back upon; and bored my best friend, Bob Conyers, to such an inhuman degree, that he fled me at the end of three weeks, and finished the winter in Florence.

Nor was this all. I hired a high-stepping horse, and distinguished myself in the Park on Sundays.

I accepted the theatrical business of the *Pimlico Patriot*, on the bare chance of sometimes seeing my divinity in the stalls; and, having committed every other absurdity of which youth is capable, I crowned the whole by collecting my miscellaneous stories into three showy volumes, and publishing them anonymously, with the following enigmatical dedication:

"*To Miss* * * * * *

"MADAM,

If I dared, I would lay these volumes at your feet, and entreat your gracious permission to ennoble them with your name; but, wanting the courage to address you, I venture only to do with them what I have already done with my heart, myself, and the few talents heaven has bestowed on me — dedicate them to you in silent homage, and suffer them to float down the stream of time as safely, or perilously, as chance may ordain.

"I am, Madam,

"Your most devoted servant,

"— —."

But they were not destined to float down the Stream of Time under any circumstances. They went to the bottom like lead, and were no more seen.

The tales themselves were slight enough, and light enough, to have drifted through the libraries as safely as other straws; and perhaps would have done so, if I had not sent them into the world with a declaration on the title-page. But the reviewers

pounced upon my luckless dedication, and made such savage fun of me that the public laughed and passed on — and all because I could not help adoring Miss Carew.

I do not think I was much affected by this ill-fortune. My joys and sorrows were all "lodged beyond the reach of fate," in Cloudland, at that time; but I sent a copy of the work (gorgeously bound in white morocco, and addressed in a feigned hand) to Miss Carew, and derived an idiotic satisfaction from the thought that she had perhaps read my stories, and even wondered, not unkindly, who the unknown author might be.

I look back upon the whole of that season as through a mist. I am dimly conscious that I ought not to have been at large. I remember days when I was preposterously happy, and days when I was preposterously miserable. I am haunted by the humiliating recollection of how my landlady surprised me in tears one morning over a dish of devilled kidneys. The kidneys that winter were always blacked, and my boots never. An unlimited duty was levied on my wine and tea; and the cat, with a perverted appetite to which the evidence of Natural History offers no parallel, stole several bundles of my best cigars. Mrs. Mozley knew my secret. I have not the slightest doubt that she read me as easily as she read my newspapers, my letters, and the rest of my private papers. I was in an abject state, and she treated me as she pleased. What were boots, or kidneys, or choice Havannahs, to a soul given over to the contemplation of Miss Carew?

Thus the winter wore by, and the spring; and the trees in the little square that had looked so green for about a fortnight, were brown and dusty with the summer drought. And still I did penance in the park, and immolated myself at the theatres, and was rewarded at long intervals by a distant bow, or a polite smile from Miss Carew. If I caught but a passing glimpse of her once in each long week, I was consoled. If I met her at an evening party — if I danced in the same quadrille with her — I was happy for a month. Once — only once — I was so blest as to hand her down to supper; and went home, like Paul Flemming, with a halo round my head.

Suddenly, in the middle of June, when the season was at its height, and the weather at its brightest, the sun went out in the heavens, and London became a howling wilderness.

The *Court Journal* announced the departure of Miss Carew for her seat in Yorkshire.

I sent in my resignation to the editor of the *Pimlico Patriot* by the next post, and gave myself up to despair. I told myself that I had done with life. I shaved no more. I wore slippers, scorned cravats, and grew reckless about my hands. I was a misanthrope — a recluse — a hater of my species. I became the terror of all the little boys about the square; and I derived a gloomy satisfaction from the perusal of "Taylor on Poisons."

This crisis had lasted about a week, when Sir Geoffrey Buchanan called upon me.

Sir Geoffrey Buchanan is one of the best men that breathe the good north country air; hearty,

joyous, hospitable, boisterous, good-humoured, good-looking, weighs fifteen stone, and stands six feet three without his shoes. He is about forty-five years of age, and owns large estates in Durham and Northumberland. About eight years ago, he married a pretty, penniless French governess, who makes him perfectly happy. His ruling hobby is mechanics. With a keen taste for field sports — with a kennel full of hounds, a stable full of hunters, and one of the most perfect yachts that ever flitted over the face of the waters, Geoffrey Buchanan's first and foremost delight is in his workshop. The inventor is born, not made; and Geoffrey is a born inventor. He is gifted with that inconvenient ingenuity that is perpetually on the alert to improve everything. His house is a museum of experimental mechanics; but his inventions, I am bound to confess, seldom answer the precise purpose for which they are intended. Too frequently, indeed, they do something that nobody expects from them, and which is highly disagreeable when done. He invented a warming apparatus, for instance, that blew up four of his green-houses; a mowing machine that nearly cut his own legs off; and a baby-jumper that all but strangled his eldest-born at the tender age of eleven months. He says of himself that he has achieved more splendid failures than any man of science upon record; but then no amount of failure discourages him. No sooner has one invention turned out badly, than he begins another, still more complicated, still more impracticable, and based, of course, like the last, on the soundest principles. Dear old Geoffrey

Buchanan! Everyone laughed at him, and everyone loved him; and I believe I did less of the first, and more of the last, than most people. Yet I cannot say that I was in the least delighted to hear his hearty voice at my door that dusty, sunny, dismal morning in June, as I sat, obstinately melancholy, in my little first-floor lodging, bewailing my blighted hopes, and Miss Carew.

I had instructed Mrs. Mozley to deny me to all comers; but Sir Geoffrey Buchanan insisted on being admitted.

"Engaged?" I heard him say. "What do you mean by engaged, ma'am?. Is he at home, and alone?"

"Mr. Dundonald is at home, sir, and alone, sir," replied my landlady, apologetically; "but it's his particular orders . . ."

"Particular fiddlesticks!" interrupted Buchanan. "I've had trouble enough to find this confounded house, and I'm not going away now without seeing him. There — you needn't announce me, ma'am. I'll make it all right, and take the blame myself. First floor, did you say? Thank you."

And then came his heavy step on the stairs, his jovial face at the door, and a mighty, outstretched hand, that gripped mine till it ached again.

"Here's a pretty fellow!" exclaimed he. "Here's a fellow that refuses to see his friends, and keeps a female griffin to tell them he's engaged. Engaged indeed! If you were not only engaged, but married, Phil Dundonald — married six times over, like Bluebeard — I'd see you, by Jove!"

"Confound it, Buchanan," I said peevishly, "you needn't crush one's hand to a jelly! Your grasp is like a vice."

"Like a vice, my dear fellow? Not a bit of it. Like a virtue — like all the virtues, Christian and Pagan! And now tell me why you shut yourself up in this way. Are you working too hard at this deuced book-making trade? — eh? Spinning stories of love and madness? Dealing out battle, murder, and sudden death at so much per column? It won't do, you know. It won't pay. The machinery of the brain is of a mighty cunning and delicate adjustment, young man, and not easily repaired when out of order."

"I'm not working particularly hard just now," I replied.

"You're not ill, boy?"

"Oh, no — only a little fagged. One gets fagged towards the close of the season."

"Not ill, and not hard at work," said Sir Geoffrey, doubtfully. "Then, to return to my original question — Why do you shut yourself up?"

"Because I'm unsociable."

"And why are you unsociable, Phil?"

"Why do you cross-examine me, as if I were in a witness-box?" I exclaimed, impatiently. "How can I tell why I am unsociable, unless it is because I am sulky — disagreeable — out of sorts — and fit company for no one but myself?"

Buchanan went over to the windows, drew up both the blinds to the very top, and then, taking

me by the shoulders as if I were a child, turned my face to the light and stared at me deliberately.

"You are not well," said he. "You are pale, nervous, irritable — you must let me prescribe for you."

"Nonsense, Buchanan. I am all right."

"On the contrary, you are all wrong. Now look here, my fine fellow — here's a little prescription that I always carry about with me; and as you know the particulars of your own complaint better than I do, all you have to do is just to fill in the figures, and get the physic made up as soon as possible."

Saying which, he took a blank cheque from his pocket-book, and laid it before me on the table.

I put the paper back into his hand.

"Upon my life, Buchanan," I said, hurriedly, "you are altogether mistaken. I feel your kindness as much as if I accepted it; but I am as free from difficulty as yourself. I have more than I need; and I owe no man a farthing."

With a troubled look upon his honest face, he replaced the cheque in his pocket-book.

"Well," he said, "if you won't speak, I can't make you; but I'm confident there's something wrong — and I know I could do something to put matters straight, if you'd only give me the chance. However, that's not what I came here to say. I've only been in London two days, and I go home to-night; but I was determined not to leave the place without seeing you. I want you to come down to Seaborough Court the week after next."

"Thank you;" I replied; "but . . . ."

"It will do you all the good in the world, man — let a little fresh air in upon your imagination, and clean the windows in your brain."

"But I cannot spare the time at present," I replied.

"You said just now you were not particularly busy!"

"If I am not, I ought to be. My publisher is really urgent, just now, about a little book that ought to be in the press, and . . ."

"Fiddlesticks! We'll give you a den to scribble in, if scribble you must."

"Upon my word, Buchanan . . . ."

"Upon my last will and testament, Dundonald, I daren't go home without your promise. My wife told me to take no refusal, and, by Jove, sir, you must and shall come."

"Lady Buchanan is a great deal too kind," I said; "but it will be far pleasanter and more convenient to me to run down to Durham later in the year."

"It won't be half so pleasant," persisted my friend. "Later in the year we shall perhaps be alone; and you know, my dear boy, we're not amusing people ourselves. We're well enough in our way; but it's a common-place, humdrum way. If you come now, you'll meet a nice little party. There'll be our lively neighbour, the Honourable Mrs. Macpherson . . ."

"A detestable woman — like a comb, all back and teeth."

"And Brewer — you remember Brewer of the 18th Light Dragoons?"

"There are few people whom I would forget with greater pleasure. Captain Brewer unites the profligacy of Whitehall to the dullness of Buckingham Palace; and I hate anachronisms."

"Well, then, there's Lord Sherbrooke — you won't deny that he's worth meeting; or that he's a thoroughly sensible, well-informed, cultivated man?"

"Lord Sherbrooke is the greatest bore I know. He is not a man at all — he is simply a work of compilation. His mind is as ill-dressed as his body, and his opinions, like his clothes, have something incongruous about them, as if they belonged to somebody else. And so they do. He hasn't a thought that is not second-hand; and he steals from the dead as shamelessly as he steals from the living. Talk to him about art, and he spouts Ruskin — about theology, and he gives you a dilution of Colenso — about politics, and he garbles last night's debate. If he ventures on a witticism, it is Sydney Smith's; and when he grows sentimental over the third bottle of port, he drenches you with Moore and Byron. No, my dear fellow, you cannot tempt me with Lord Sherbrooke."

"So it seems," said Geoffrey, half-laughing, half-vexed. "What a bitter temper you're in, man! What's the matter with you?"

"The deuce knows," I replied, fretfully. "I told you I was fit company for no one but myself; and you see I was right."

"I see that you are bent on making the worst

of yourself, and staying at home," said Buchanan, taking up his gloves, and preparing to be gone. "I'm heartily sorry for it."

"And I am sorry to say 'No' so often — I am, indeed. But I shall enjoy Seaborough Court twice as much when you are alone."

"By-the-by, I didn't tell you all the names, either. Clement Stone is coming."

"The Rector of Broadmere? I remember him. A very pleasant, gentlemanly fellow."

"That he is, Phil — a capital fellow. And Miss Carew."

I could not believe my ears.

"*And who?*" I asked, faintly.

"Miss Carew — Miss Carew of Wandesborough Abbey. I'm surprised, Phil, that you don't know Miss Carew."

The sun was shining in the heavens again; the howling wilderness had burst into blossom; the world was a garden of Eden; and I had not done with life, after all!

"I — I believe I have met Miss — the lady you mention," I said, indifferently — "in society."

"No doubt — no doubt. She goes everywhere. Any message for Clement Stone?"

He asked me if I had any message for Clement Stone! He had taken me at my word, and he was actually going! In another minute it would be too late. I became desperate.

"My regards, of course," I replied. "My very cordial regards. He is a man whom I like immensely — a man whose religion is of the right, sunny,

genial sort; and who, because he is wise, does not disdain to be witty. I am very sorry not to meet him."

"He will be very sorry too," said that obtuse Geoffrey. "He took to you amazingly; and he often speaks of you. Bless my heart! two o'clock already, and I have an appointment in the City at three. Good-bye, my dear fellow — God bless you!"

"I tell you what it is, Buchanan — if you had mentioned Stone's name from the first, I'm not sure that I should have been so obstinate in my refusal," said I, in a burst of candour.

It was a consummate piece of hypocrisy and I cannot remember it to this day without a blush; but it was my last, and only sure card — and I played it.

Sir Geoffrey Buchanan opened his blue eyes, and lifted up his great voice in a joyous laugh that might have been heard across the square.

"In the name of all the Gods, then," said he, "why don't you change your mind?"

"Because — because you'll think me such a fool, if I do."

"Then upon my life, Phil, I shall think it the only redeeming piece of sense that you've perpetrated to-day. Come, is it settled, and may we expect you next Monday week?"

"Well — I think you may; wind and weather permitting."

"Listen to him! What have you, a landsman, to do with wind and weather, I should like to know? By-the-by, I've made a most remarkable improvement

in my yacht — really an extraordinary improvement, Phil."

"Indeed! What is it?"

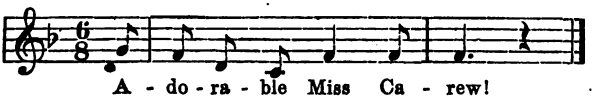
"An arrangement of wheels and pulleys, by which all the ropes can be worked by one man — that man sitting quietly to his work in a little deck-cabin built up amidships for the purpose. I can't explain it to you without the diagrams; but I assure you it's the most remarkable improvement of the age."

"You're as bad, Buchanan," said I, laughingly, "as Monsieur Auguste Comte, who thinks he could improve the solar system. What will you attempt to improve next?"

"Your manners, Phil!" he replied, with another great laugh. "Your manners. But I mean to patent my invention, sir — ay, and to bring it before the Board of Admiralty, too. But there, it's of no use to talk to an incredulous youngster like you. Good-bye, till Monday week; and beware of that female griffin down-stairs. She's a terrific phenomenon, by Jove! — a cross between Medusa and the Sphinx."

Saying which, he again nearly wrenched my hand off, and went down the stairs, laughing like a Titan.

He had found me in the lowest circle of the *Inferno;* he left me in the *Paradiso.* I was in a blissful dream. I walked upon air; I breathed sunshine; I was pervaded by a sentiment of universal benevolence. I felt that I could have taken Mrs. Mozley in my arms, and invoked benisons upon her; but I abstained from that act of devotion, and presented her, instead, with a bottle of my best brandy.

The chop that I ate that day for my dinner was cut from an Arcadian sheep, and had the flavour of the golden age. My apple-dumpling was made from the golden fruit of the Hesperides. My modest pint of ordinary claret tasted like that "mighty wine" given to Ulysses by Maron the priest of Phœbus. The very organ that droned "the Low-backed Car" under my window, while I discussed my humble banquet, seemed, to my infatuated ear, to repeat a perpetual refrain of

CHAPTER II.

SEABOROUGH COURT stands high, and faces the sea. The waves that roll in so heavily upon the beach with the flow of the tide, ebb back, unbroken by even a rock, to the coast of Denmark. A low chain of hills protects the house towards the north, so that it occupies a kind of natural terrace between the higher ground and the level of the sea. There are but few trees, and the general aspect of the place, facing as it does to the north-east, is somewhat bleak and barren; but the pasture lands beyond the hills are rich and abundant, and the air in summer is delicious. The house itself is an incongruous pile, the oldest portion of which dates back to the Wars of the Roses; but which has been, in the course of centuries, so frequently altered, enlarged, and modernized, that scarcely any of its historical features remain. It is not in the least like those antique mansions that novelists delight to describe. It is not "a dear old place," with ivied turrets, lilied moats, and pannelled drawing-rooms looking out upon ancestral oaks. In it are no dusky corridors, nor tapestried chambers, nor cloistered courtyards. No half-deserted chapel, peopled with the crumbling effigies of bygone knights and dames, nestles in the shadow of its walls. On the contrary, it presents at first sight a thoroughly sub-

stantial, comfortable aspect; is in excellent repair; not in the least picturesque; and, on the side of the principal entrance, bears a strong general resemblance to the College of Surgeons. It is only when one has been round to the back, and grown learned in the ins and outs of Seaborough Court, that its antiquity becomes apparent. An unfamiliar guest might dwell there for weeks without discovering that it was anything but a good modern house; and yet it contains a wing of the time of William and Mary, a magnificent Elizabethan kitchen and buttery, and cellars of massy vaulted stone as old as the battle of Hexham. But my friend Geoffrey is no archæologist, and troubles himself very little about the past glories of his family, his residence, or anything that is his. He is prouder of his old port than of his pedigree; and prouder, perhaps, of a corkscrew of his own invention, than of either. As for his kitchen and cellarage, they are both famous; but their fame is founded on the good things that come out of them, and not upon their mediæval merits — and that is precisely the sort of renown that their owner appreciates.

I went down to Durham on the Monday week, as proposed — that memorable Monday of that memorable first week in July — taking with me dress-gloves enough for Briareus, and dress-boots enough for a centipede. As for perfumery and pomade, I could have oiled and scented a volunteer corps without being perceptibly the poorer. I do not think, by the way, that psychological inquirers have directed such attention as the question deserves, to

that subtle link which connects pomade with the tender passion. It is in the mysterious nature of things that Cupid and Briedenbach should play into one another's hands. A man in love gravitates by an inevitable law towards bear's grease, and takes a morbid interest in his hair. I remember that I derived inexpressible consolation at this time from the purchase of Patent Moelline, Glycerine Oil, Crystalline Cream, Nutritive Pomade, and the like emollient substances. Above all, that I found a soothing influence, such as "divine philosophy" never shed upon the troubled soul of man, in Rowland's Balm of Columbia.

It is not in my power to give any coherent account of the first two or three days at Seaborough Court. They went by, as it were, in an elemental dream of love and jealousy, bliss and despair. I was jealous of Captain Brewer, of Lord Sherbrooke, of the Reverend Clement Stone (who had a wife and seven children in Berkshire) and of even dear, good, hospitable Geoffrey Buchanan himself. I could neither sleep, nor eat, nor talk, as in the days when my heart was free of Miss Carew. I had been used to make some little success in society once upon a time; but now I could not have said a brilliant thing to save my life. I was painfully conscious of my own shy stupidity. I knew that I was duller than Brewer, and that even Lord Sherbrooke's plagiarisms left me in the shade. I burned to distinguish myself. I wished that there might be a great storm, and a vessel wrecked in sight of the house; and pictured to myself how I alone, of any

man upon that coast, would go out with a rope about my waist, and save the fainting sufferers one by one. I wished that Seaborough Court might take fire in the night, and thought how glorious it would be, when the conflagration was at its highest, and the dastard crowd stood aloof, to rush forward through the smoke and flames, and battle my way up the burning staircase, till I found the chamber where Miss Carew stood at the window, appealing in vain for help from those below. Then I would take her in my arms; wrap a blanket round her beloved form, to protect her drapery from the flames; and bear her, staggering, breathless, but undaunted, to a place of safety, where, falling at her feet, all blackened and ghastly, I would say: "I love you, Helen Carew! I never dared to tell you till now," — *and so die.*

But these were wild dreams. The weather was glorious; the sea like a mirror of blue steel; and as for fire, there seemed no more chance of it than if Seaborough Court had been built, like the palace of the O'Donaghue, at the bottom of the Lake of Killarney.

At length there came a morning — I think it was the fourth or fifth after my arrival — when we went out for a long day on the water in Sir Geoffrey's yacht. The party consisted of Mrs. Macpherson, the Reverend Clement Stone, Captain Brewer, Miss Carew, and myself. Buchanan, as captain of his own "tub," took the lead. Lord Sherbrooke, with whom the sea disagreed, remained behind; and

Lady Buchanan preferred to stay at home with her children.

I think I never saw so splendid a morning. We had weighed anchor by eight, and breakfasted on board. Everyone was in the highest spirits. The sea was inconceivably blue, and melted into a golden haze on the horizon. A delicious air breathed from the south, and dimpled the waters now and then, as with a smile. The shore receded by imperceptible degrees; the grey gulls flashed by at intervals between us and the sky; and the yacht glided on with half-filled sails, like a toy ship upon a sheet of ornamental water. We were bound for a romantic little island off the coast of Northumberland, some twenty miles to the north of Seaborough Court, where we were to picnic — a mere speck of an island, said Geoffrey, scarcely a mile and a half in circumference; containing three or four fishermen's cottages, about a dozen inhabitants, one clump of trees, a handful of herbage, and a few sheep. Nobody ever went there. It was entered on no map. It had not even a name. Could anything be more delightful?

On we went, then, laughing, talking, revelling in the sea and the sunshine, and immensely amused by Sir Geoffrey's ingenious invention for the management of his yacht. He was charmed to show it, and explain it, and illustrate it to us, over and over again. He assured us that it was the most useful, the most surprising, the most important improvement that the world had seen for the last quarter of a century. It really did seem very in-

genious. I have not now the slightest conception of what the mechanism was; but I understood it well enough, or fancied I understood it, at the time. All that I remember of it is a kind of framework fixed about half-way down the mainmast, serving, I think, to collect a large number of ropes into a nucleus, whence they were drawn still lower through the roof of an absurd-looking little sentry-box, in the middle of the deck. Inside this sentry-box was a bewildering maze of pulleys, nooses, and knotted rope's ends; and it looked more like a very small and overcrowded belfry than anything else that I could think of.

Thus the first hour or two went by, somewhat lazily on the part of the yacht, but very pleasantly. About half-past ten, the breeze freshened a little, and some three or four tiny clouds, white and fleecy, like a flight of swans, rose out from the golden haze, and drifted across the sky. Then the sails swelled; a joyous ripple sprang up under our bows; and our progress became perceptibly quickened. By eleven, we were cutting through the water at a brilliant rate, scattering a shower of diamonds at every dip of our prow, and leaving a creamy trail in our wake, that widened and vanished as we left it behind. Every little wave by this time had its crest; and the sky was traversed by a long procession of majestic, opalescent clouds, which became every moment statelier and more numerous. Then the wind shifted a point or two, and the yacht began to pitch rather more than was strictly agreeable.

I went up to Geoffrey in the sentry-box, and

found him looking very red and warm, and ringing, as it seemed to me, a frantic peal upon all the imaginary bells at once.

"The yacht pitches confoundedly, my dear fellow," I said. "She doesn't seem so steady on her legs as last year. What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing," replied my friend, clutching desperately at two or three different nooses in succession, as if he wanted to hang himself, and was feeling for the stoutest rope. "Nothing ails the yacht — it's only these pulleys that don't work as they ought. I'm trying to bring her head round a bit, and . . . ."

A tremendous lurch, followed by a little scream from Mrs. Macpherson, interrupted his explanation.

"And in the meanwhile, I presume, we all run a fair chance of going to the bottom?"

"It's the first time I've ever known the system work badly," groaned poor Buchanan.

"System, indeed!" I exclaimed, angrily. "What business have you to endanger your friend's lives with any system under the sun? Confound your system!"

At this moment the entanglement, whatever it might be, yielded to his efforts — the mainsail swung to its proper bearings, and the little vessel, now once more before the wind, sped on as before.

Buchanan drew a deep breath, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"Don't say anything about this to the others, Phil," he said, hurriedly. "I'm very sorry — more shocked and sorry than I can tell you. The truth is, the thing does not answer as I had hoped — and

— and our position just now was — was really, for a moment or two, a position of danger."

I looked at the sky and the sea, and the lovely, laughing face of Miss Carew, as she sat talking on the after-deck; and a sudden pang of apprehension shot through me.

"If I am any judge of weather, Geoffrey Buchanan," I said, "we shall have a gale blowing up before three more hours have gone by."

"I know it," he replied.

"You know it? Good heavens, man! what do you mean by saying you know it? What do you propose to do to ensure the safety of your yacht?"

"Look there," said he, pointing straight ahead. "Do you see the island?"

"I see something — a mere point — a scrap of rock scarcely big enough for a seagull to build on."

He smiled and shook his head.

"Don't be too hard upon me, Phil," said he. "Don't make quite the worst of everything. That's the island, and we are within three miles of it. It isn't quite as big as Australia; but it's big enough to afford you all a pleasant resting-place, while I press the fishermen into my service, and set to work to put the yacht trim and ship-shape again, before we start for home. A couple of hours will do it; and as for all this gear, it shall be pitched overboard as soon as we drop anchor — every thread and pulley of it!"

He sighed as he said this, and glanced up re-

gretfully at his invention. Indignant as I had been a few moments before, I felt sorry for him now.

"No, no," I said, "don't do that — don't throw it overboard. Stow it away in the hold; and perhaps when you have leisure to turn the thing over in your mind, you may hit upon some alteration that will make your system available after all!"

He shook his head again.

"I think not," he replied; "I fear not. Pshaw! 'tis only another illusion gone. I am used to reading the burial service over my dreams."

He spoke with a bitterness foreign to his nature. I saw that he was deeply mortified, and even more disappointed than mortified; so I said a cheering word or two and left him — as I felt sure he would prefer to be left — alone.

The little isle was now growing momentarily more distinct, and every glass was levelled at it. Transparent and purplish at first, it changed from purple to grey, from grey to a greenish brown, and presently showed as an irregular whinstone rock, sloping to the sea on the south-east, and rising to the north in a kind of turfy promontory. As we drew nearer, there became visible a little cluster of white cottages near the water's edge — a boat moored in a tiny creek close by — a clump of gaunt trees on a green rise about the very centre of the islet; and a few sheep dotted over the broken upland. To the left, some six or seven miles distant, lay the undulating coast of Northumberland, and the dim outlines of the hills. Far and wide, in every other direction, north-east, east, and south,

stretched the sea. A more utterly barren, unpromising rock, could scarcely be conceived in dull, or stormy weather; but seen thus in the full blaze of a brilliant July sun, with a fresh breeze blowing, and the blue waves chasing each other across the glittering ocean, it looked positively beautiful.

Sir Geoffrey ran the yacht "into port," and cast anchor about half-past eleven. We landed shortly after, to the intense wonder and delight of three women, one old white-haired fisherman, and some six or eight half-wild, sun-browned flaxen-headed children. From these we learned that the two other men (there being but three on the island) were gone over to Tynemouth; that their colony consisted of but three families, and numbered thirteen souls, including six children and one infant in arms; that the two fishermen now absent were the sole support of the whole community, which lived by the produce of their nets; and that the island was assessed as a part of Islandshire, and belonged to the county of Northumberland. These poor colonists, we learned, paid an almost nominal rent for their small tenements, and were exempted, by ancient privilege, from most of the taxes levied elsewhere. They also added to their scanty gains by the preparation of kelp, and the breeding of a few sheep. The children knew of no world beyond that in which they were born; and we found that one of the women had not even been over to the mainland for more than eleven years.

We went into their cottages; one of which served as a little general shop, and supplied the

place with groceries, hardware, and haberdashery of the humblest description. The old man made nets, and did a little cobbling and carpentering. In each home we saw a Bible; and in one a hymn-book, and a few Scriptural prints in black frames. One of the women kept a cock and three or four hens; and all the little dwellings were clean and tidy.

Having chatted with the women, patted the children on their flaxen heads, and distributed a few presents among them, we went up to the plateau where the sheep and the trees were, and prepared our picnic. In a few minutes the cloth was spread, the hampers were unpacked, the corks drawn, and the guests seated.

It was a merry meal, and we were as hungry as befitted people who had spent three or four hours on the sea. We jested, we laughed, we drank healths, we made speeches, we christened the island Juan Fernandez, and poured a libation of champagne upon the scanty turf in consecration of the name. When we had quite done, and were lying listlessly round the remains of our feast, Sir Geoffrey proposed cigars; so we four men strolled away to a point of steep rock at the northward extremity of the island, and left the ladies to amuse themselves till our Havannahs were smoked out. No sooner were we well out of earshot, however, than Buchanan took me by the arm, and, drawing me aside, said in a low, troubled voice,

"I'm at a dead lock, Dundonald. That old man down yonder is of no use, and I have only one sailor and a boy on board. It will be impossible to

get the yacht in sailing trim, in time for us to reach Seaborough Court to-night."

I looked at him in blank dismay.

"WHAT?" said I.

"We shall have to stop here," he replied, "till to-morrow."

"Stop here? On this wretched rock — with two ladies .... Nonsense, Buchanan you are joking!"

"I wish to heaven I were," said he, gravely; "but the breeze is freshening every moment, and look at the sky — look at those huge leaden clouds piling up to the windward! I daren't risk it, with the yacht in its present state. There's no help for it."

"But here are four of us. Set us all to work, and let us see what we can do. I'm ready to turn up my sleeves and begin; and Brewer and Stone, of course, will do the same."

"I have thought of that," replied my friend, "and I spoke about it to my mate just now, as he was bringing up the hampers; but it would be of no use. It's seaman's work; and we want all sorts of things that are not to be had in this place. No — all we can do is, to wait patiently till the two fishermen come back; and then send them over to the nearest coast-town for such tools, and tackling, and help as may be needful."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "we may be kept here, at that rate, for a day or two!"

"I hope not — but I fear we can hardly get off to-morrow."

I sat down on the turf in despair.

"What will Miss Carew do?" I ejaculated.

"What will Mrs. Macpherson do?" added Sir Geoffrey, with a comical shrug. "Miss Carew is a sensible, high-spirited, genial woman, and will treat the whole thing as a rare piece of adventure; but Mrs. Macpherson will be as helpless and miserable as a Frenchman on board a Channel steamer."

"We must break it to them," said I.

"I dare not," said he. "Will you?"

"Not for the universe. Ask the parson."

So we called up Mr. Stone and Captain Brewer, and revealed the difficulty we were in. The gallant dragoon scowled, twirled his mustachios, and muttered a few oaths between his teeth; but the rector of Broadmere roared with laughter; protested that a pleasanter calamity could not possibly have befallen us; and went off upon our forlorn hope, with all the assurance in life. He was the very man for the purpose — a man with a laughing eye, a persuasive voice, a large good-humoured mouth, a portly presence, and an inexhaustible fund of good humour. Armed with these good gifts, and with absolute confidence in his own eloquence, our ambassador presented himself before the ladies, and stated our case so successfully that the result surpassed our hopes. They received the dreadful intelligence, not merely with indulgence, but with favour and merriment; and in a few minutes we were all going down to the cottages in a body, to see what arrangements could be made for their accommodation.

The result was, that the largest tenement was

secured for Miss Carew and Mrs. Macpherson, the inhabitants migrating *en masse*, and distributing themselves as well as they could among their neighbours; while we men agreed to pass the night on board. In the meanwhile, a rapid "cleaning up" and "clearing out" was accomplished in the ladies' bower; a supply of rugs, mattresses, blankets, napery, and other comforts was imported from the yacht; and in the course of an hour or two, by the help of a pretty tablecloth, a vase of cottage-flowers, some folding-chairs from Sir Geoffrey's state cabin, and a few such trifles, we had succeeded in turning the single ground-floor room into a very tolerable parlour. In this parlour, later in the day, we took tea; and a very merry tea it was — with Miss Carew at the head of the table. After tea, having no cards, no music, no books, no appliances or means of entertainment whatever, we strolled out again to the higher ground, and watched the sea and the sky. It was a grand sight. The sun had just gone down behind a bank of purple vapour. The waves, now of a dull lead colour, were running high, and beat savagely against the rocks. Troops of wild, rent, ragged clouds fled in tumultuous panic over the face of the heavens; and the moaning of the wind sang a shrill treble to the hoarse bass of the sea. Presently, a tremendous sheet of lightning seemed to rend open the whole broad field of sky, and a mighty peal of thunder shook the very ground beneath our feet. We hastened back to the cottage, and had scarcely reached shelter before the storm began in earnest. And a terrible storm it was. It

Lady Buchanan preferred to stay at home with her children.

I think I never saw so splendid a morning. We had weighed anchor by eight, and breakfasted on board. Everyone was in the highest spirits. The sea was inconceivably blue, and melted into a golden haze on the horizon. A delicious air breathed from the south, and dimpled the waters now and then, as with a smile. The shore receded by imperceptible degrees; the grey gulls flashed by at intervals between us and the sky; and the yacht glided on with half-filled sails, like a toy ship upon a sheet of ornamental water. We were bound for a romantic little island off the coast of Northumberland, some twenty miles to the north of Seaborough Court, where we were to picnic — a mere speck of an island, said Geoffrey, scarcely a mile and a half in circumference; containing three or four fishermen's cottages, about a dozen inhabitants, one clump of trees, a handful of herbage, and a few sheep. Nobody ever went there. It was entered on no map. It had not even a name. Could anything be more delightful?

On we went, then, laughing, talking, revelling in the sea and the sunshine, and immensely amused by Sir Geoffrey's ingenious invention for the management of his yacht. He was charmed to show it, and explain it, and illustrate it to us, over and over again. He assured us that it was the most useful, the most surprising, the most important improvement that the world had seen for the last quarter of a century. It really did seem very in-

conscious dignity of good-breeding; but it was a dignity perfectly compatible with the most airy, brilliant, sportive gaiety that ever bewitched the heart of a man. Her laugh was soft and low, yet musical as a silver *carrillon*; and her eyes — her large, limpid golden-brown eyes — had that half-wild archness and vivacity of expression that has been sometimes indicated by Romney; but has never been rendered in perfection save by the brush of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

It was a merry breakfast, and quite a luxurious one, considering our shipwrecked condition. We had tea, toast, eggs and fish; flowers on the table; and, through the open door, an enchanting glimpse of the sunlit sea. The conversation turned on what we were to do with ourselves all the long day. For the ladies, walking was simply impossible. The heavy rains of the last ten hours had reduced the turfy plateau to a mere bog; and, save the little space of rock and clay on which the cottages stood, the plateau was the island.

"There is not a book to be had in the place," said Miss Carew; "except the Bible."

"Estimable work, no doubt," drawled the dragoon; "but decidedly heavy."

"If we had but a pack of cards, *I* could be content," sighed Mrs. Macpherson.

"Mr. Dundonald, who, I have heard it whispered, is a poet," said Miss Carew, "must be our Feramorz, and invent stories for our entertainment; while Captain Brewer, who so admirably criticises a volume which, I presume, he has never read, can undertake

found him looking very red and warm, and ringing, as it seemed to me, a frantic peal upon all the imaginary bells at once.

"The yacht pitches confoundedly, my dear fellow," I said. "She doesn't seem so steady on her legs as last year. What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing," replied my friend, clutching desperately at two or three different nooses in succession, as if he wanted to hang himself, and was feeling for the stoutest rope. "Nothing ails the yacht — it's only these pulleys that don't work as they ought. I'm trying to bring her head round a bit, and . . . ."

A tremendous lurch, followed by a little scream from Mrs. Macpherson, interrupted his explanation.

"And in the meanwhile, I presume, we all run a fair chance of going to the bottom?"

"It's the first time I've ever known the system work badly," groaned poor Buchanan.

"System, indeed!" I exclaimed, angrily. "What business have you to endanger your friend's lives with any system under the sun? Confound your system!"

At this moment the entanglement, whatever it might be, yielded to his efforts — the mainsail swung to its proper bearings, and the little vessel, now once more before the wind, sped on as before.

Buchanan drew a deep breath, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"Don't say anything about this to the others, Phil," he said, hurriedly. "I'm very sorry — more shocked and sorry than I can tell you. The truth is, the thing does not answer as I had hoped — and

He burst into a joyous laugh.

"I thought that would astonish you," he said. "Now listen, and I will tell you all about it. I have just been into the shop — you know the general shop in the next cottage — to buy a supply of tea, sugar, tobacco, and so forth, for my two poor fellows down at the yacht. There was a pile of waste paper on the counter, and from this pile of waste paper the good woman who served me took a sheet, or a half-sheet, to wrap up each packet of groceries as she weighed it out. I saw that it was printed matter, and that it looked like good type, and good paper. I took up a piece. It was evidently part of a tale, and looked amusing. I turned over a few more leaves, and found that the lot consisted of a collection of stories, ready folded as if for binding. The title-pages and beginning were wanting; but what there was appeared to be consecutive. I thought at once of the destitution of my friends, and bought up the whole stock on the spot. Now for your vote of thanks!"

"You must wait for that, my dear fellow, till we have seen whether your purchase is readable," said Mr. Stone. "Waste paper at twopence the pound is rather unpromising stuff."

"Horrid trash, no doubt," observed Captain Brewer.

"Trash is better than nothing," said Miss Carew, kindly; "if it only gives us something to laugh at. May I look at your treasure, Sir Geoffrey? I have no doubt we shall quarry a great deal of amusement

out of it, somehow. So! it is folded, but not cu Perhaps Mr. Dundonald will do us the favour to cu the leaves while Sir Geoffrey breakfasts; and by and-by we can, perhaps, find a sheltered nook some where under the rocks, and take it by turns to rea aloud."

Delighted to be employed by her, I seized knife, and prepared to go to work with enthusiasn But at the first glance at the first page, my enthusiasi vanished. I paused — flushed up to the roots of m hair — and experienced a very decided inclinatio to sink through the floor, dive into the depths of th ocean, or, in short, do anything that might enabl me to interpose the longest possible distance i the shortest possible time between myself and m friends.

In this shilling's worth of Waste Paper, I r cognised my own stories — my unsuccessful, muc ridiculed, luckless stories — the very volumes whic I had dedicated with such fatal but ingenious ol scurity to Miss Carew!

And they had come to this. They were utterl condemned and rejected, given over to the trunk maker and the grocer, sold off as waste stock, an bought by weight at twopence per pound!

"Well, Phil," said Buchanan, "is the stu readable?"

"That is a difficult question to answer of an book at first sight," I replied.

"But does it look as if it might be amusing? said Mrs. Macpherson.

"Madam, I have not yet cut a dozen pages."

Sir Geoffrey laughed.

"What a provoking fellow you are, Phil!" said he. "Don't you see that we want you to hazard an opinion of some sort?"

"Then I adopt Captain Brewer's," I replied, somewhat bitterly. "I have no doubt that it's 'horrid trash,' and that it will be sad waste of time to read it."

"But all our time just now is waste time," said Miss Carew, "so what can we do better than bestow it on waste paper?"

As she said this with a somewhat peculiar intonation, I looked up, and found her eyes fixed full upon me.

An hour later, we had carried out our folding chairs to a little recess among the rocks, just out of sight of the cottages — a pleasant, shady, solitary place, facing the open sea, and carpeted under foot with fine white sand. The dashing of the waves, and an occasional sound of hammering on board the yacht, where Sir Geoffrey was making rapid havoc of his invention, alone disturbed the quiet of our retreat.

"Well," said the rector, lazily, "who is to begin?"

Miss Carew selected a few sheets from the pile of papers, and, looking round the circle with her pretty, imperious air, said: —

"Mr. Dundonald shall begin. Nay, sir — no excuses. From the decisions of this court there is no appeal."

"Oh, queen!" I replied, "to hear is to obey."

And so, having first laid the papers on my head in token of humility, I began the first reading.

CHAPTER III.

TERRIBLE COMPANY.

I AM a Frenchman by birth, and my name is François Thierry. I need not weary you with my early history. Enough, that I committed a political offence — that I was sent to the galleys for it — that I am an exile for it to this day. The brand was not abolished in my time. If I chose, I could show you the fiery letters on my shoulder.

I was arrested, tried, and sentenced, in Paris. I went out of the court with my condemnation ringing in my ears. The rumbling wheels of the prison-van repeated it all the way from Paris to Bicêtre that evening, and all the next day, and the next, and the next, along the weary road from Bicêtre to Toulon. When I look back upon that time, I think I must have been stupefied by the unexpected severity of my sentence, for I remember nothing of the journey, nor of the places where we stopped — nothing but the eternal repetition of "*travaux forcés — travaux forcés — travaux forcés à perpétuité*," over and over, and over again. Late in the afternoon of the third day, the van stopped, the door was thrown open, and I was conducted across a stone yard, through a stone corridor, into a huge stone hall, dimly lighted from above. Here I was interrogated by a military superintendent, and en-

I sat down on the turf in despair.

"What will Miss Carew do?" I ejaculated.

"What will Mrs. Macpherson do?" added Sir Geoffrey, with a comical shrug. "Miss Carew is a sensible, high-spirited, genial woman, and will treat the whole thing as a rare piece of adventure; but Mrs. Macpherson will be as helpless and miserable as a Frenchman on board a Channel steamer."

"We must break it to them," said I.

"I dare not," said he. "Will you?"

"Not for the universe. Ask the parson."

So we called up Mr. Stone and Captain Brewer, and revealed the difficulty we were in. The gallant dragoon scowled, twirled his mustachios, and muttered a few oaths between his teeth; but the rector of Broadmere roared with laughter; protested that a pleasanter calamity could not possibly have befallen us; and went off upon our forlorn hope, with all the assurance in life. He was the very man for the purpose — a man with a laughing eye, a persuasive voice, a large good-humoured mouth, a portly presence, and an inexhaustible fund of good humour. Armed with these good gifts, and with absolute confidence in his own eloquence, our ambassador presented himself before the ladies, and stated our case so successfully that the result surpassed our hopes. They received the dreadful intelligence, not merely with indulgence, but with favour and merriment; and in a few minutes we were all going down to the cottages in a body, to see what arrangements could be made for their accommodation.

The result was, that the largest tenement was

secured for Miss Carew and Mrs. Macpherson, the inhabitants migrating *en masse*, and distributing themselves as well as they could among their neighbours; while we men agreed to pass the night on board. In the meanwhile, a rapid "cleaning up" and "clearing out" was accomplished in the ladies' bower; a supply of rugs, mattresses, blankets, napery, and other comforts was imported from the yacht; and in the course of an hour or two, by the help of a pretty tablecloth, a vase of cottage-flowers, some folding-chairs from Sir Geoffrey's state cabin, and a few such trifles, we had succeeded in turning the single ground-floor room into a very tolerable parlour. In this parlour, later in the day, we took tea; and a very merry tea it was — with Miss Carew at the head of the table. After tea, having no cards, no music, no books, no appliances or means of entertainment whatever, we strolled out again to the higher ground, and watched the sea and the sky. It was a grand sight. The sun had just gone down behind a bank of purple vapour. The waves, now of a dull lead colour, were running high, and beat savagely against the rocks. Troops of wild, rent, ragged clouds fled in tumultuous panic over the face of the heavens; and the moaning of the wind sang a shrill treble to the hoarse bass of the sea. Presently, a tremendous sheet of lightning seemed to rend open the whole broad field of sky, and a mighty peal of thunder shook the very ground beneath our feet. We hastened back to the cottage, and had scarcely reached shelter before the storm began in earnest. And a terrible storm it was. It

lasted nearly the whole night, and kept us all awake till daybreak. But for the snug little creek in which the yacht had been anchored, heaven only knows what would have become of us. In any less sheltered nook, she must have been torn from her moorings like a mere weed; while we must either have sent her adrift to take her chance with the wind and waves, or have risked almost certain death in the attempt to navigate her.

However, none of these misfortunes happened. The morning came; and with it a sea still rolling, a wind still blowing; but sunshine, safety, and prospects evidently mending.

We assembled at nine, for breakfast; all except Sir Geoffrey, who was busy down at the yacht, and somewhat late. Miss Carew presided at the tea-table. It seemed natural to her to take the lead, and natural to us that she should take it. There was grace in all she did; and her manner of doing it, seemed, somehow, to ennoble the commonest action. She could not pour out a cup of tea without appearing to enhance the value of the little courtesy by the way in which she rendered it. I had heard the same thing said of Mrs. Siddons by those who had known her in private; but I never quite believed them till I became acquainted with Miss Carew.

I would not, however, be supposed to compare Miss Carew with Mrs. Siddons in any particular but this; nor even desire to say that in this she did actually resemble her. There was nothing tragic, nor majestic, about Miss Carew. Hers was the un-

conscious dignity of good-breeding; but it was a dignity perfectly compatible with the most airy, brilliant, sportive gaiety that ever bewitched the heart of a man. Her laugh was soft and low, yet musical as a silver *carrillon*; and her eyes — her large, limpid golden-brown eyes — had that half-wild archness and vivacity of expression that has been sometimes indicated by Romney; but has never been rendered in perfection save by the brush of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

It was a merry breakfast, and quite a luxurious one, considering our shipwrecked condition. We had tea, toast, eggs and fish; flowers on the table; and, through the open door, an enchanting glimpse of the sunlit sea. The conversation turned on what we were to do with ourselves all the long day. For the ladies, walking was simply impossible. The heavy rains of the last ten hours had reduced the turfy plateau to a mere bog; and, save the little space of rock and clay on which the cottages stood, the plateau was the island.

"There is not a book to be had in the place," said Miss Carew; "except the Bible."

"Estimable work, no doubt," drawled the dragoon; "but decidedly heavy."

"If we had but a pack of cards, *I* could be content," sighed Mrs. Macpherson.

"Mr. Dundonald, who, I have heard it whispered, is a poet," said Miss Carew, "must be our Feramorz, and invent stories for our entertainment; while Captain Brewer, who so admirably criticises a volume which, I presume, he has never read, can undertake

the part of Fadladeen. The character is, as it were, made for him."

While I was stammering something about my inability to perform the task assigned to me, Sir Geoffrey suddenly darkened the doorway with his six feet three of solid substance.

"Good morning to you all!" said he, in his vociferous, hearty way. "I come before you, ladies and gentlemen, as a public benefactor. Prepare an oration for me. Wreathe the flowing bowl, and twine the chaplet! I am going to make you all happy."

"Do it, my dear fellow," said the rector, "and don't fatigue yourself by saying so much about it beforehand."

"I have found a treasure," shouted Geoffrey, with a face of huge delight. "Guess what it is."

We guessed all the impossible things we could think of; but he shook his head at every fresh suggestion.

"I've bought it for you," said he; "and I've paid twopence a pound for it. What d'ye say to perfect happiness at twopence a pound?"

"That the price is remarkably reasonable," laughed Miss Carew; "but we should like to have a more definite idea of what it really is."

"There's what it is!" said he, producing a good-sized parcel, tied round with a piece of red tape "It's a shilling's worth of Waste Paper."

"A shilling's worth of Waste Paper!" we repeated with the unanimity of an Exeter Hall chorus.

He burst into a joyous laugh.

"I thought that would astonish you," he said. "Now listen, and I will tell you all about it. I have just been into the shop — you know the general shop in the next cottage — to buy a supply of tea, sugar, tobacco, and so forth, for my two poor fellows down at the yacht. There was a pile of waste paper on the counter, and from this pile of waste paper the good woman who served me took a sheet, or a half-sheet, to wrap up each packet of groceries as she weighed it out. I saw that it was printed matter, and that it looked like good type, and good paper. I took up a piece. It was evidently part of a tale, and looked amusing. I turned over a few more leaves, and found that the lot consisted of a collection of stories, ready folded as if for binding. The title-pages and beginning were wanting; but what there was appeared to be consecutive. I thought at once of the destitution of my friends, and bought up the whole stock on the spot. Now for your vote of thanks!"

"You must wait for that, my dear fellow, till we have seen whether your purchase is readable," said Mr. Stone. "Waste paper at twopence the pound is rather unpromising stuff."

"Horrid trash, no doubt," observed Captain Brewer.

"Trash is better than nothing," said Miss Carew, kindly; "if it only gives us something to laugh at. May I look at your treasure, Sir Geoffrey? I have no doubt we shall quarry a great deal of amusement

out of it, somehow. So! it is folded, but not cut. Perhaps Mr. Dundonald will do us the favour to cut the leaves while Sir Geoffrey breakfasts; and by-and-by we can, perhaps, find a sheltered nook somewhere under the rocks, and take it by turns to read aloud."

Delighted to be employed by her, I seized a knife, and prepared to go to work with enthusiasm. But at the first glance at the first page, my enthusiasm vanished. I paused — flushed up to the roots of my hair — and experienced a very decided inclination to sink through the floor, dive into the depths of the ocean, or, in short, do anything that might enable me to interpose the longest possible distance in the shortest possible time between myself and my friends.

In this shilling's worth of Waste Paper, I recognised my own stories — my unsuccessful, much ridiculed, luckless stories — the very volumes which I had dedicated with such fatal but ingenious obscurity to Miss Carew!

And they had come to this. They were utterly condemned and rejected, given over to the trunk-maker and the grocer, sold off as waste stock, and bought by weight at twopence per pound!

"Well, Phil," said Buchanan, "is the stuff readable?"

"That is a difficult question to answer of any book at first sight," I replied.

"But does it look as if it might be amusing?' said Mrs. Macpherson.

"Madam, I have not yet cut a dozen pages."

Sir Geoffrey laughed.

"What a provoking fellow you are, Phil!" said he. "Don't you see that we want you to hazard an opinion of some sort?"

"Then I adopt Captain Brewer's," I replied, somewhat bitterly. "I have no doubt that it's 'horrid trash,' and that it will be sad waste of time to read it."

"But all our time just now is waste time," said Miss Carew, "so what can we do better than bestow it on waste paper?"

As she said this with a somewhat peculiar intonation, I looked up, and found her eyes fixed full upon me.

An hour later, we had carried out our folding chairs to a little recess among the rocks, just out of sight of the cottages — a pleasant, shady, solitary place, facing the open sea, and carpeted under foot with fine white sand. The dashing of the waves, and an occasional sound of hammering on board the yacht, where Sir Geoffrey was making rapid havoc of his invention, alone disturbed the quiet of our retreat.

"Well," said the rector, lazily, "who is to begin?"

Miss Carew selected a few sheets from the pile of papers, and, looking round the circle with her pretty, imperious air, said: —

"Mr. Dundonald shall begin. Nay, sir — no excuses. From the decisions of this court there is no appeal."

"Oh, queen!" I replied, "to hear is to obey."

And so, having first laid the papers on my head in token of humility, I began the first reading.

CHAPTER III.

TERRIBLE COMPANY.

I AM a Frenchman by birth, and my name is François Thierry. I need not weary you with my early history. Enough, that I committed a political offence — that I was sent to the galleys for it — that I am an exile for it to this day. The brand was not abolished in my time. If I chose, I could show you the fiery letters on my shoulder.

I was arrested, tried, and sentenced, in Paris. I went out of the court with my condemnation ringing in my ears. The rumbling wheels of the prison-van repeated it all the way from Paris to Bicêtre that evening, and all the next day, and the next, and the next, along the weary road from Bicêtre to Toulon. When I look back upon that time, I think I must have been stupefied by the unexpected severity of my sentence, for I remember nothing of the journey, nor of the places where we stopped — nothing but the eternal repetition of "*travaux forcés — travaux forcés — travaux forcés à perpétuité*," over and over, and over again. Late in the afternoon of the third day, the van stopped, the door was thrown open, and I was conducted across a stone yard, through a stone corridor, into a huge stone hall, dimly lighted from above. Here I was interrogated by a military superintendent, and en-

tered by name in a ponderous ledger bound and clasped with iron, like a book in fetters.

"Number Two Hundred and Seven," said the superintendent. "Green."

They took me into an adjoining room, searched, stripped, and plunged me into a cold bath. When I came out of the bath, I put on the livery of the galleys — a coarse canvas shirt, trousers of tawny serge, a red serge blouse, and heavy shoes clamped with iron. Last of all, a green woollen cap. On each leg of the trousers, and on the breast and back of the blouse, were printed the fatal letters "T. F." On a brass label in the front of the cap, were engraved the figures "207." From that moment I lost my individuality. I was no longer François Thierry. I was Number Two Hundred and Seven. The superintendent stood by and looked on.

"Come, be quick," said he, twirling his long moustache between his thumb and forefinger. "It grows late, and you must be married before supper."

"Married!" I repeated.

The superintendent laughed, and lighted a cigar, and his laugh was echoed by the guards and jailers.

Down another stone corridor, across another yard, into another gloomy hall, the very counterpart of the last, but filled with squalid figures, noisy with the clank of fetters, and pierced at each end with a circular opening, through which a cannon's mouth showed grimly.

"Bring Number Two Hundred and Six," said the superintendent, "and call the priest."

Number Two Hundred and Six came from a further corner of the hall, dragging a heavy chain, and along with him a blacksmith, bare-armed and leather-aproned.

"Lie down," said the blacksmith, with an insulting spurn of the foot.

I lay down. A heavy iron ring attached to a chain of eighteen links was then fitted to my ankle, and riveted with the single stroke of the hammer. A second ring next received the disengaged ends of my companion's chain and mine, and was secured in the same manner. The echo of each blow resounded through the vaulted roof like a hollow laugh.

"Good," said the superintendent, drawing a small red book from his pocket. "Number Two Hundred and Seven; attend to the prison code. If you attempt to escape without succeeding, you will be bastinadoed. If you succeed in getting beyond the port, and are then taken, you will receive three years of double chaining. As soon as you are missed, three cannon shots will be fired, and alarm flags will be hoisted on every bastion. Signals will be telegraphed to the maritime guards, and to the police of the ten neighbouring districts. A price will be set upon your head. Placards will be posted upon the gates of Toulon, and sent to every town throughout the empire. It will be lawful to fire upon you, if you cannot be captured alive."

Having read this with grim complacency, the superintendent resumed his cigar, replaced the book in his pocket, and walked away.

All was over now — all the incredulous wonder, the dreamy dulness, the smouldering hope, of the past three days. I was a felon, and (slavery in slavery!) chained to a fellow-felon. I looked up, and found his eyes upon me. He was a swart, heavy-browed, sullen-jawed man of about forty; not much taller than myself, but of immensely powerful build.

"So," said he, "you're for life, are you? So am I."

"How do you know I am for life?" I asked, wearily.

"By that." And he touched my cap roughly with the back of his hand. "Green, for life. Red, for a term of years. What are you in for?"

"I conspired against the Government."

He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"Devil's mass! Then you're a gentleman-convict, I suppose! Pity you've not a berth to yourselves — we poor forçats hate such fine company."

"Are there many political prisoners?" I asked, after a moment's pause.

"None, in this department."

Then, as if detecting my unspoken thought, "I am no innocent," he added with an oath. "This is the fourth time I have been here. Did you ever hear of Gasparo?"

"Gasparo the forger?"

He nodded.

"Who escaped three or four months since, and . . ."

"And flung the sentinel over the ramparts, just as he was going to give the alarm. I'm the man."

I had heard of him, as a man who, early in his career, had been sentenced to a prolonged term of solitary imprisonment, and who had come forth from his cell hardened and desperate. I shuddered, and, as I shuddered, found his evil eye taking vindictive note of me. From that moment he hated me. From that moment I loathed him.

A bell rang, and a detachment of convicts came in from labour. They were immediately searched by the guard, and chained up, two and two, to a sloping wooden platform that reached all down the centre of the hall. Our afternoon meal was then served out, consisting of a mess of beans, an allowance of bread and ship-biscuit, and a measure of thin wine. I drank the wine; but I could eat nothing. Gasparo took what he chose from my untouched allowance, and those who were nearest scrambled for the rest. The supper over, a shrill whistle echoed down the hall, each man took his narrow mattress from under the platform which made our common bedstead, rolled himself in a piece of seaweed matting, and lay down for the night. In less than five minutes, all was profoundly silent. Now and then I heard the blacksmith going round with his hammer, testing the gratings, and trying the locks, in all the corridors. Now and then the guard stalked past with his musket on his shoulder. Sometimes a convict moaned, or shook

his fetters in his sleep. Thus the weary hours went by. My companion slept heavily, and even I lost consciousness at last.

I was sentenced to hard labour. At Toulon the hard labour is of various kinds; such as quarrying, mining, pumping in the docks, lading and unlading vessels, transporting ammunition, and so forth. Gasparo and I were employed with about two hundred other convicts in a quarry a little beyond the port. Day after day, week after week, from seven in the morning until seven at night, the rocks echoed with our blows. At every blow, our chains rang and rebounded on the stony soil. In that fierce climate, terrible tempests and tropical droughts succeed each other throughout the summer and autumn. Often, and often, after toiling for hours under a burning sky, have I gone back to prison and to my pallet, drenched to the skin. Thus the last days of the dreary spring ebbed slowly past; and then the more dreary summer; and then the autumn-time came round.

My fellow-convict was a Piedmontese. He had been a burglar, a forger, an incendiary. In his last escape he had committed man-slaughter. Heaven alone knows how my sufferings were multiplied by that abhorred companionship — how I shrank from the touch of his hand — how I sickened if his breath came over me as we lay side by side at night. I strove to disguise my loathing; but in vain. He knew it as well as I knew it, and he revenged himself upon me by every means that a vindictive nature could devise. That he should

tyrannise over me was not wonderful; for his physical strength was gigantic, and he was looked upon as an authorised despot throughout the port; but simple tyranny was the least part of what I had to endure. I had been fastidiously nurtured; he purposely and continually offended my sense of delicacy. I was unaccustomed to bodily labour; he imposed on me the largest share of our daily work. When I needed rest, he would insist on walking. When my limbs were cramped, he would lie down obstinately, and refuse to stir. He delighted to sing blasphemous songs, and relate hideous stories of what he had thought and resolved on in his solitude. He would even twist the chain in such wise that it should gall me at every step. I was at that time just twenty-two years of age, and had been sickly from boyhood. To retaliate, or to defend myself, would have been alike impossible. To complain to the superintendent would only have been to provoke my tyrant to greater cruelty.

There came a day, at length, when his hatred seemed to abate. He allowed me to rest when our hour of repose came round. He abstained from singing the songs I abhorred, and fell into long fits of abstraction. The next morning, shortly after we had begun work, he drew near enough to speak to me in a whisper.

"François, have you a mind to escape?"

I felt the hot blood rush to my face. I clasped my hands. I could not speak.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"To the death."

"Listen, then. To-morrow, Marshal De La Tour d'Auvergne will visit the port. He will inspect the docks, the prisons, the quarries. There will be plenty of cannonading from the forts and the shipping, and if two convicts escape, a volley more or less will attract no attention round about Toulon. Do you understand?"

"You mean that no one will recognize the signals?"

"Not even the sentries at the town-gate — not even the guards in the next quarry. Devil's mass! What can be easier than to strike off each other's fetters with the pickaxe when the superintendent is not looking, and the salutes are firing? Will you venture?"

"With my life!"

"A bargain. Shake hands on it."

I had never touched his hand in fellowship before, and I felt as if my own were blood-stained by the contact. I knew by the sullen fire in his glance, that he interpreted my faltering touch aright.

We were roused an hour earlier than usual the following morning, and went through a general inspection in the prison-yard. Before going to work, we were served with a double allowance of wine. At one o'clock we heard the first far-off salutes from the ships of war in the harbour. The sound ran through me like a galvanic shock. One by one the forts took up the signal. It was repeated by the gun-boats closer in shore. Discharge followed dis-

charge, all along the batteries on both sides of the port, and the air grew thick with smoke.

"As the first shot is fired yonder," whispered Gasparo, pointing to the barracks behind the prison, "strike at the first link of my chain, close to the ankle."

A rapid suspicion flashed across me.

"If I do, how can I be sure that you will free me afterwards? No, Gasparo; you must deal the first blow."

"As you please," he replied, with a laugh and an imprecation.

At the same instant came a flash from the battlements of the barrack close by, and then a thunderous reverberation, multiplied again and again by the rocks around. As the roar burst over our heads, I saw him strike, and felt the fetters fall. Scarcely had the echo of the first gun died away, when the second was fired. It was now Gasparo's turn to be free. I struck, but less skilfully, and had twice to repeat the blow before breaking the stubborn link. We then went on, apparently with our work, standing somewhat close together, with the chain huddled up between us. No one had observed us, and no one, at first sight, could have detected what we had done. At the third shot, a party of officers and gentlemen made their appearance at the bend of the road leading up to the quarry. In an instant every head was turned in their direction; every felon paused in his work; every guard presented arms. At that moment we flung away our caps and pickaxes, scaled the rugged bit of cliff on which we

had been toiling, dropped into the ravine below, and made for the mountain passes that lead into the valley. Encumbered still with the iron anklets to which our chain had been fastened, we could not run very swiftly. To add to our difficulties, the road was uneven, strewn with blocks of fallen granite, and tortuous as the windings of a snake. Suddenly, on turning a sharp angle of projecting cliff, we came upon a little guard-house and a couple of sentries. To retreat was impossible. The soldiers were within a few yards of us. They presented their pieces, and called to us to surrender. Gasparo turned upon me, like a wolf at bay.

"Curse you!" said he, dealing me a tremendous blow; "stay and be taken! I have always hated you!"

I fell, as if struck down by a sledge hammer, and, as I fell, saw him dash one soldier to the ground, dart past the other, heard a shot, and then . . . all became dark, and I know no more.

When I next opened my eyes, I found myself lying on the floor of a small unfurnished room dimly lighted by a tiny window close against the ceiling. It seemed as if weeks had gone by since I lost consciousness. I had scarcely strength to rise, and, having risen, kept my feet with difficulty. Where my head had lain, the floor was wet with blood. Giddy and perplexed, I leaned against the wall, and tried to think.

In the first place, where was I? Evidently in no part of the prison from which I had escaped. There, all was solid stone and iron grating; here

was only whitewashed lath and plaster. I must be in a chamber of the little guard-house: probably in an upper chamber. Where, then, were the soldiers? Where was Gasparo? Had I strength to clamber up to that window, and if so, in what direction did that window look out? I stole to the door, and found it locked. I listened, breathlessly, but could hear no sound either below or above. Creeping back again, I saw that the little window was at least four feet above my head. The smooth plaster offered no projections by which I could raise myself, and there was not even a fireplace in the room from which I could have wrenched a bar to dig out holes in the wall for my feet and hands. Stay! there was my leathern belt, and on the belt, the iron hook which used to sustain my chain when I was not at work. I tore off the hook, picked away the lath and plaster in three or four places, climbed up, opened the window, and gazed out eagerly. Before me, at a distance of not more than thirty-five or forty feet, rose the rugged cliff under whose shelter the guard-house was built; at my feet lay a little kitchen-garden, divided from the base of the rock by a muddy ditch which seemed to run through the ravine; to the right and left, as well as I could judge, lay the rocky path along which our course had been directed. My decision was taken at once. To stay was certain capture; to venture, at all hazards, would make matters no worse. Again I listened, and again all was quiet. I drew myself through the little casement, dropped as gently as I could upon the moist earth, and, crouching against the

wall, asked myself what I should do next. To climb the cliff would be to offer myself as a target to the first soldier who saw me. To venture along the ravine, would be, perhaps, to encounter Gasparo and his captors face to face. Besides it was getting dusk, and, under cover of the night, if I could only conceal myself till then, I might yet escape. But where was that concealment to be found? Heaven be thanked for the thought! There was the ditch!

Only two windows looked out upon the garden from the back of the guard-house. From one of those windows I had just now let myself down, and the other was partly shuttered up. I did not dare, however, openly to cross the garden. I dropped upon my face, and crawled in the furrows between the rows of vegetables, until I came to the ditch. Here the water rose nearly to my waist, but the banks on either side were considerably higher, and, by stooping, I found that I could walk without bringing my head to the level of the road. I thus followed the course of the ditch for some two or three hundred yards in the direction of Toulon, thinking that my pursuers would be less likely to suspect me of doubling back towards prison, than of pushing forward towards the country. Half lying, half crouching under the rank grasses that fringed the bank above, I then watched the gathering shadows. By-and-by I heard the evening gun, and a moment after, something like a distant sound of voices. Hark! was that a shout? Unable to endure the agony of suspense, I lifted my head and peeped cautiously out. There were lights moving in the

windows of the guard-house — there were dark figures in the garden — there were hasty tramplings of feet upon the road above! Presently a light flashed over the water only a few yards from my hiding-place! I slid gently down at full-length, and suffered the foul ooze to close noiselessly over me. Lying thus, I held my breath till the very beatings of my heart seemed to suffocate me, and the veins in my temples were almost bursting. I could bear it no longer — I rose to the surface — I breathed again — I looked — I listened. All was darkness and silence. My pursuers were gone by!

I suffered an hour to go by, too, before I ventured to move again. By that time it was intensely dark, and had begun to rain heavily. The water in the ditch became a brawling torrent, through which I waded, unheard, past the very windows of a guard-house.

After toiling through the water for a mile or more, I ventured out upon the road again: and so, with the rain and wind beating in my face, and the scattered boulders tripping me up continually, I made my way through the whole length of the winding pass, and came out upon the more open country about midnight. With no other guide than the wind, which was blowing from the north-east, and without even a star to help me, I then struck off to the right, following what seemed to be a rough by-road, lying through a valley. By-and-by the rain abated, and I discerned the dark outlines of a chain of hills extending all along to the left of the road. These, I concluded, must be the Maures. All

was well, so far. I had taken the right direction, and was on the way to Italy.

Excepting to sit down now and then for a few minutes by the wayside, I never paused in my flight all the night through. Fatigue and want of food prevented me, it is true, from walking very fast; but the love of liberty was strong within me, and, by keeping steadily on, I succeeded in placing about eighteen miles between myself and Toulon. At five o'clock, just as the day began to dawn, I heard a peal of chimes, and found that I was approaching a large town. In order to avoid this town, I was forced to turn back for some distance, and take to the heights. The sun had now risen, and I dared go no farther; so, having pulled some turnips in a field as I went along, I took refuge in a little lonely copse in a hollow among the hills, and there lay all day in safety. When night again closed in, I resumed my journey, keeping always among the mountains, and coming now and then on grand glimpses of moonlit bays, and tranquil islands lying off the shore; now and then, on pastoral hamlets nestled up among the palmy heights; or on promontories overgrown with the cactus and the aloe. I rested all the second day in a ruined shed at the bottom of a deserted sand-pit, and, in the evening, feeling that I could no longer sustain life without some fitting nourishment, made my way down towards a tiny fishing village on the coast below. It was quite dark by the time I reached the level ground. I walked boldly past the cottages of the fishermen, meeting only an old woman and a little

child on the way, and knocked at the curé's door. He opened it himself. I told my story in half a dozen words. The good man believed and pitied me. He gave me food and wine, an old handkerchief to wrap about my head, an old coat to replace my convict's jacket, and two or three francs to help me on my way. I parted from him with tears.

I walked all that night again, and all the next, keeping somewhat close upon the coast, and hiding among the cliffs during the daytime. On the fifth morning, having left Antibes behind me during the night's march, I came to the banks of the Var; crossed the torrent about half a mile below the wooden bridge; plunged into the pine-woods on the Sardinian side of the frontier; and lay down to rest on Italian ground at last!

How, though comparatively safe, I still pursued my journey by the least frequented ways — how I bought a file at the first hamlet to which I came, and freed myself from the iron anklet — how, having lurked about Nice till my hair and beard had grown, I begged my way on to Genoa — how, at Genoa, I hung about the port, earning a scanty livelihood by any chance work that I could get, and so struggled, somehow, through the inclement winter — how, towards the early spring, I worked my passage on board a small trader from Genoa to Fiumicino, touching at all the ports along the coast — and how, coming slowly up the Tiber in a barge laden with oil and wine, I landed one evening in March on the Ripetta quay, in Rome; how all these things hap-

pened, and what physical hardships I endured in the meanwhile, I have no time here to relate in detail. My object had been to get to Rome, and that object was at last attained. In so large a city, and at so great a distance from the scene of my imprisonment, I was personally safe. I might hope to turn my talents and education to account. I might even find friends among the strangers who would flock thither to the Easter festivals. Full of hope, therefore, I sought a humble lodging in the neighbourhood of the quay, gave up a day or two to the enjoyment of my liberty and of the sights of Rome, and then set myself to find some regular employment.

Regular employment, or, indeed, employment of any kind, was not, however so easily to be obtained. It was a season of distress. The previous harvest had been a failure, and the winter unusually severe. There had also been disturbances in Naples, and the travellers this spring were fewer by some thousands than the ordinary average. So dull a carnival had not been known for years. The artists had sold no paintings, and the sculptors no statues. The cameo-cutters and mosaicists were starving. The tradesmen, the hotel-keepers, the professional ciceroni, were all complaining bitterly. Day by day, my hopes faded and my prospects darkened. Day by day, the few scudi I had scraped together on the passage melted away. I had thought to obtain a clerkship, or a secretaryship, or a situation in some public library. Before three weeks were over, I would gladly have swept a studio. At length there

came a day when I saw nothing before me but starvation; when my last bajocco was expended; when my *padrone* shut the door in my face, and I knew not where to turn for a meal or a shelter. All that afternoon, I wandered hopelessly about the streets. It was Good Friday, of all days of the year. The churches were hung with black; the bells were tolling; the thoroughfares were crowded with people in mourning. I went into the little church of Santa Martina. They were chanting a Miserere, probably with no great skill, but with a pathos that seemed to open up all the sources of my despair.

Outcast that I was, I slept that night under a dark arch near the theatre of Marcellus. The morning dawned upon a glorious day, and I crept out, shivering into the sunshine. Lying crouched against a bit of warm wall, I caught myself wondering more than once how long it would be worth while to endure the agonies of hunger, and whether the brown waters of the Tiber were deep enough to drown a man. It seemed hard to die so young. My future might have been so pleasant, so honourable! The rough life that I had been leading of late, too, had strengthened me in every way, physically and mentally. I had grown taller. My muscles were more developed. I was twice as active, as energetic, as resolute, as I had been a year before. And of what use were these things to me? I must die, and they could only serve to make me die the harder.

I got up and wandered about the streets, as I had wandered the day before. Once I asked for alms, and was repulsed. I followed mechanically

in the stream of carriages and foot passengers, and found myself, by-and-by, in the midst of the crowd that ebbs and flows continually about Saint Peter's during Easter week. Stupefied and weary, I turned aside into the vestibule of the Sagrestia, and cowered down in the shelter of a doorway. Two gentlemen were reading a printed paper wafered against a pillar close by.

"Good heavens!" said one to the other, "that a man should risk his neck for a few pauls!"

"Ay, and with the knowledge that out of eighty workmen, six or eight are dashed to pieces every time," added his companion.

"Shocking! Why, that is an average of ten per cent!"

"No less. It is a desperate service."

"But a fine sight," said the first speaker, philosophically; and with this they walked away.

I sprang to my feet, and read the placard with avidity. It was headed, "Illumination of Saint Peter's," and announced that, eighty workmen being required for the lighting of the dome and cupola, and three hundred for the cornices, pillars, colonnade, and so forth, the *amministratore* was empowered, &c., &c. In conclusion, it stated that every workman employed on the dome and cupola should receive in payment a dinner and twenty-four pauls, the wages of the rest being less than a third of that sum.

A desperate service, it was true; but I was a desperate man. After all, I could but die, and I might as well die after a good dinner as from star-

vation. I went at once to the *amministratore*, was entered in his list, received a couple of pauls as earnest of the contract, and engaged to present myself punctually at eleven o'clock on the following morning. That evening I supped at a street stall, and, for a few bajocchi, obtained leave to sleep on some straw, in a loft over a stable at the back of the Via del Arco.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of Easter Sunday, April the sixteenth, I found myself, accordingly, in the midst of a crowd of poor fellows, most of whom, I dare say, were as wretched as myself, waiting at the door of the administrator's office. The piazza in front of the cathedral was like a moving mosaic of life and colour. The sun was shining, the fountains were playing, the flags were flying over Saint Angelo. It was a glorious sight; but I saw it for only a few moments. As the clocks struck the hour, the folding-doors were thrown open, and we passed, in a crowd, into a hall, where two long tables were laid for our accommodation. A couple of sentinels stood at the door; an usher marshalled us, standing, round the tables, and a priest read grace.

As he began to read, a strange sensation came upon me. I felt impelled to look across to the opposite table, and there . . . . yes, by Heaven! there I saw Gasparo!

He was looking full at me, but his eyes dropped on meeting mine. I saw him turn lividly white. The recollection of all he had made me suffer, and of the dastardly blow that he had dealt me on the

day of our flight, over-powered for the moment even my surprise at seeing him in this place. Oh that I might live to meet him yet, under the free sky, where no priest was praying, and no guards were by!

The grace over, we sat down, and fell to. Not even anger had power to blunt the edge of my appetite just then. I ate like a famishing wolf, and so did most of the others. We were allowed no wine, and the doors were locked upon us, that we might not procure any elsewhere. It was a wise regulation, considering the task we had to perform; but it made us none the less noisy. Under certain circumstances, danger intoxicates like wine; and on this Easter Sunday, we eighty *sanpietrini*, any one of whom might have his brains dashed about the leads before supper-time, ate, talked, jested, and laughed, with a wild gaiety that had in it something appalling.

The dinner lasted long, and when no one seemed disposed to eat more, the tables were cleared. Most of the men threw themselves on the floor and benches, and went to sleep; Gasparo among the number. Seeing this, I could refrain no longer. I went over, and stirred him roughly with my foot.

"Gasparo! You know me?"

He looked up sullenly.

"Devil's mass! I thought you were at Toulon."

"It is not your fault that I am not at Toulon! Listen to me. If you and I survive this night, you shall answer to me for your treachery!"

He glared at me from under his deep brows, and, without replying, turned over on his face again, as if to sleep.

"*Ecco un maladetto!*" (There's an accursed fellow!) said one of the others, with a significant shrug, as I came away.

"Do you know anything of him?" I asked, eagerly.

"*Cospetto!* I know nothing of him; but that he is said to be a wolf and a blasphemer!"

I could learn no more, so I also stretched myself upon the floor, as far as possible from my enemy, and fell profoundly asleep.

At seven, the guards roused those who still slept, and served each man with a small mug of thin wine. We were then formed into a double file, marched round by the back of the cathedral, and conducted up an inclined plane to the roof below the dome. From this point, a long series of staircases and winding passages carried us up between the double walls of the dome; and, at different stages in the ascent, a certain number of us were detached and posted ready for work. I was detached about halfway up, and I saw Gasparo going higher still. When we were all posted, the superintendents came round and gave us our instructions. At a given signal, every man was to pass out through the loophole or window before which he was placed, and seat himself astride upon a narrow shelf of wood hanging to a strong rope just below. This rope came through the window, was wound round a roller, and secured from within. At the next signal, a lighted torch would be put into his right hand, and he was to grasp the rope firmly with his left. At the third signal, the rope was to be unwound from

within by an assistant placed there for the purpose, he was to be allowed to slide rapidly down, over the curve of the dome, and, while thus sliding, was to apply his torch to every lamp he passed in his downward progress.

Having received these instructions, we waited each man at his window, until the first signal should be given.

It was fast getting dark, and the silver illumination had been lighted since seven. All the great ribs of the dome, as far as I could see; all the cornices and friezes of the façade below; all the columns and parapets of the great colonnade surrounding the piazza four hundred feet below, were traced out in lines of paper lanterns, the light from which, subdued by the paper, gleamed with a silvery fire, which had a magical and wondrous look. Between and among these *lanternoni*, were placed, at different intervals all over the cathedral on the side facing the piazza, iron cups called *padelle*, ready filled with tallow and turpentine. To light those on the dome and cupola, was the perilous task of the *sanpietrini;* when they were all lighted, the golden illumination would be effected.

A few moments of intense suspense elapsed. At every second, the evening grew darker, the *lanternoni* burned brighter, the surging hum of thousands in the piazza and streets below, rose louder to our ears. I felt the quickening breath of the assistant at my shoulder — I could almost hear the beating of my heart. Suddenly, like the passing of an electric current, the first signal flew from lip to lip.

I got out, and crossed my legs firmly round the board — with the second signal, I seized the blazing torch — with the third, I felt myself launched, and, lighting every cup as I glided past, saw all the mountainous dome above and below me spring into lines of leaping flame. The clock was now striking eight, and when the last stroke sounded, the whole cathedral was glowing in outlines of fire. A roar, like the roar of a great ocean, rose up from the multitude below, and seemed to shake the very dome against which I was clinging. I could even see the light upon the gazing faces, the crowd upon the bridge of St. Angelo, and the boats swarming along the Tiber.

Having dropped safely to the full length of my rope, and lighted my allotted share of lamps, I was now sitting in secure enjoyment of this amazing scene. All at once, I felt the rope vibrate. I looked up, saw a man clinging by one hand to the iron rod supporting the *padelle*, and with the other . . . . . Merciful Heaven! It was the Piedmontese firing the rope above me with his torch!

I had no time for thought — I acted upon instinct. It was done in one fearful moment. I clambered up like a cat, dashed my torch full in the felon's face, and grasped the rope an inch or two above the spot where it was burning! Blinded and baffled, he uttered a terrible cry, and dropped like a stone. Through all the roar of the living ocean below, I could hear the dull crash with which he came down upon the leaded roof. Echoing through

all the years that have gone by since that night, I hear it now.

I had scarcely drawn breath, when I found myself being hauled up. The assistance came not a moment too soon, for I was sick and giddy with horror, and fainted as soon as I was safe in the corridor. The next day I waited on the *amministratore*, and told him all that had happened. My statement was corroborated by the vacant rope from which Gasparo had descended, and the burnt fragment by which I had been drawn up. The *amministratore* repeated my story to a prelate high in office; and while none, even of the *sanpietrini*, suspected that my enemy had come by his death in any unusual manner, the truth was whispered from palace to palace until it reached the Vatican. I received much sympathy, and such pecuniary assistance as enabled me to confront the future without fear. Since that time my fortunes have been various. I have lived in many countries, and known many strange adventures, but never, before or since, found myself in such terrible company as on the dome of St. Peter's, that memorable Easter Sunday night.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ELEVENTH OF MARCH.

(From a Pocket-book of Forty Years ago.)

FORTY years ago!

An old pocket-book lies before me, bound in scarlet morocco, and fastened with a silver clasp. The leather is mildewed; the silver tarnished; the paper yellow; the ink faded. It has been hidden away at the back of an antique oaken bureau since the last day of the year during which I had it in use; and that was forty years ago. Aye, here is a page turned down — turned down at Wednesday, March the eleventh, eighteen hundred and twenty-six. The entry against that date is brief and obscure enough.

"Wednesday, March 11th. — Walked from Frascati to Palazzuola, the ancient site of Alba Longa, on the Alban lake. Lodged at Franciscan convent. Brother Geronimo. Dare one rely on the testimony of the senses? *Dieu sait tout.*"

Brief as it is, however, that memorandum fires a train of long-dormant memories, and brings back with painful vividness all the circumstances to which it bears reference. I will endeavour to relate them as calmly and succinctly as possible.

I started on foot from Frascati immediately after breakfast, and rested midway in the shade of a

wooded ravine between Marino and the heights of Alba Longa. I seem to remember every trivial incident of that morning walk. I remember how the last year's leaves crackled under my feet, and how the green lizards darted to and fro in the sunlight. I fancy I still hear the slow drip of the waters that trickled down the cavernous rocks on either hand. I fancy I still smell the heavy perfume of the violets among the ferns. It was not yet noon when I emerged upon the upper ridge, and took the path that leads to Monte Cavo. The woodcutters were busy among the chestnut slopes of Palazzuola. They paused in their work, and stared at me sullenly as I passed by. Presently a little turn in the footway brought the whole lake of Albano before my eyes. Blue, silent, solitary, set round with overhanging woods, it lay in the sunshine, four hundred feet below, like a sapphire at the bottom of a malachite vase. Now and then, a soft breath from the west ruffled the placid mirror, and blurred the pictured landscape on its surface. Now and then, a file of mules, passing unseen among the forest-paths, sent a faint sound of tinkling bells across the lake. I sat down in the shade of a clump of cork-trees, and contemplated the panorama. To my left, on a precipitous platform at the verge of the basin, with Monte Cavo towering up behind, stretched the long white façade of the Convent of Palazzuola; on the opposite height, standing clear against the sky, rose the domes and pines of Castel Gondolfo; to the far right, in the blinding sunshine of the Campagna, lay Rome and the Etruscan hills.

In this spot I established myself for the day's sketching. Of so vast a scene, I could, necessarily, only select a portion. I chose the Convent, with its background of mountain, and its foreground of precipice and lake; and proceeded patiently to work out, first the leading features, and next the minuter details of the subject. Thus occupied (with an occasional pause to watch the passing of a cloud-shadow, or listen to the chiming of a distant chapel-bell), I lingered on, hour after hour, till the sun hung low in the west, and the woodcutters were all gone to their homes. I was now at least three miles from either the town of Albano or the village of Castel Gondolfo, and was, moreover, a stranger to the neighbourhood. I looked at my watch. There remained but one half hour of good daylight, and it was important that I should find my way before the dusk closed in. I rose reluctantly, and, promising myself to return to the same spot on the morrow, packed away my sketch, and prepared for the road.

At this moment, I saw a monk standing in an attitude of meditation upon a little knoll of rising ground some fifty yards ahead. His back was turned towards me; his cowl was up, his arms were folded across his breast. Neither the splendour of the heavens, nor the tender beauty of the earth, was anything to him. He seemed unconscious even of the sunset.

I hurried forward, eager to inquire my nearest path along the woods that skirt the lake; and my shadow lengthened out fantastically before me as I

ran. The monk turned abruptly. His cowl fell. He looked at me face to face. There were not more than eighteen yards between us. I saw him as plainly as I now see the page on which I write. Our eyes met ... My God! shall I ever forget those eyes?

He was still young, still handsome, but so lividly pale, so emaciated, so worn with passion, and penance, and remorse, that I stopped involuntarily, like one who finds himself on the brink of a chasm. We stood thus for a few seconds — both silent, both motionless. I could not have uttered a syllable, had my life depended on it. Then, as abruptly as he had turned towards me, he turned away and disappeared among the trees. I remained for some minutes gazing after him. My heart throbbed painfully. I shuddered, I knew not why. The very air seemed to have grown thick and oppressive; the very sunset, so golden a moment since, had turned suddenly to blood.

I went on my way, disturbed and thoughtful. The livid face and lurid eyes of the monk haunted me. I dreaded every turn of the path, lest I should again encounter them. I started when a twig fell, or a dead leaf fluttered down beside me. I was almost ashamed of the sense of relief with which I heard the sound of voices some few yards in advance, and, emerging upon an open space close against the convent, saw some half dozen friars strolling to and fro in the sunset. I inquired my way to Albano, and learned that I was still more than two miles distant.

"It will be quite dark before the Signore arrives," said one, courteously. "The Signore would do well to accept a cell at Palazzuola for the night."

I remembered the monk, and hesitated.

"There is no moon now," suggested another; "and the paths are unsafe for those who do not know them."

While I was yet undecided, a bell rang, and three or four of the loiterers went in.

"It is our supper hour," said the first speaker. "The Signore will at least condescend to share our simple fare; and afterwards, if he still decides to sleep at Albano, one of our younger brethren shall accompany him as far as the Cappucini, at the entrance to the town."

I accepted this proposition gratefully, followed my entertainers through the convent gates, and was ushered into a stone hall, furnished with a long dining table, a pulpit, a clock, a double row of deal benches, and an indifferent copy of the Last Supper of Leonardo da Vinci. The Superior advanced to welcome me.

"You have come among us, Signore," he said, "on an evening when our table is but poorly provided. Although this is not one of the appointed fast-days of the Church, we have been abstaining at Palazzuola in memory of certain circumstances connected with our own brotherhood. I hope, however, that our larder may be found to contain something better suited to a traveller's appetite than the fare you now see before you."

Saying thus, he placed me at his right hand at

the upper end of the board, and there stood till the monks were all in their places. He then repeated a Latin grace; after which each brother took his seat and began. They were twenty-three in number, twelve on one side, and eleven on the other; but I observed that a place was left vacant near the foot of the table, as if the twelfth man were yet to come. The twelfth, I felt sure, was he whom I had encountered on the way. Once possessed with this conviction, I could not keep from watching the door. Strange! I so dreaded and loathed his coming, that I almost felt as if his presence would be less intolerable than the suspense in which I awaited it!

In the meantime the monks ate in silence; and even the Superior, whose language and address were those of a well-informed man, seemed constrained and thoughtful. Their supper was of the most frugal description, and consisted of only bread, salad, grapes, and maccaroni. Mine was before long reinforced with a broiled pigeon and a flask of excellent Orvieto. I enjoyed my fare, however, as little as they seemed to enjoy theirs. Fasting as I was, I had no appetite. Weary as I was, I only longed to push my plate aside, and resume my journey.

"The Signore will not think of going farther to-night," said the Superior, after an interval of prolonged silence.

I muttered something about being expected at Albano.

"Nay, but it is already dusk, and the sky hath clouded over suddenly within the last fifteen mi-

nutes," urged he. "I fear much that we have a storm approaching. What sayest thou, brother Antonio?"

"It will be a wild night," replied the brother with whom I had first spoken.

"Aye, a wild night," repeated an old monk, lower down the table; "like this night last year — like this night two years ago!"

The superior struck the table angrily with his open hand.

"Silence!" he exclaimed authoritatively. "Silence there; and let brother Anselmo bring lights."

It was now so dark that I could scarcely distinguish the features of the last speaker, or those of the monk who rose and left the room. Again the profoundest silence fell upon all present. I could hear the footsteps of brother Anselmo echo down the passage, till they died away; and I remember listening vaguely to the ticking of the clock at the farther end of the refectory, and comparing it in my own mind to the horrible beating of an iron heart. Just at that moment a sharp gust of wind moaned past the windows, bearing with it a prolonged reverberation of distant thunder.

"Our storms up here in the mountain are severe and sudden," said the Prior, resuming our conversation at the point where it had been interrupted; "and even the waters of yonder placid lake are sometimes so tempestuous that no boat dare venture across. I fear, Signore, that you will find it impossible to proceed to Albano."

"Should the tempest come up, reverend father,"

within by an assistant placed there for the purpose, he was to be allowed to slide rapidly down, over the curve of the dome, and, while thus sliding, was to apply his torch to every lamp he passed in his downward progress.

Having received these instructions, we waited each man at his window, until the first signal should be given.

It was fast getting dark, and the silver illumination had been lighted since seven. All the great ribs of the dome, as far as I could see; all the cornices and friezes of the façade below; all the columns and parapets of the great colonnade surrounding the piazza four hundred feet below, were traced out in lines of paper lanterns, the light from which, subdued by the paper, gleamed with a silvery fire, which had a magical and wondrous look. Between and among these *lanternoni*, were placed, at different intervals all over the cathedral on the side facing the piazza, iron cups called *padelle*, ready filled with tallow and turpentine. To light those on the dome and cupola, was the perilous task of the *sanpietrini;* when they were all lighted, the golden illumination would be effected.

A few moments of intense suspense elapsed. At every second, the evening grew darker, the *lanternoni* burned brighter, the surging hum of thousands in the piazza and streets below, rose louder to our ears. I felt the quickening breath of the assistant at my shoulder — I could almost hear the beating of my heart. Suddenly, like the passing of an electric current, the first signal flew from lip to lip.

I got out, and crossed my legs firmly round the board — with the second signal, I seized the blazing torch — with the third, I felt myself launched, and, lighting every cup as I glided past, saw all the mountainous dome above and below me spring into lines of leaping flame. The clock was now striking eight, and when the last stroke sounded, the whole cathedral was glowing in outlines of fire. A roar, like the roar of a great ocean, rose up from the multitude below, and seemed to shake the very dome against which I was clinging. I could even see the light upon the gazing faces, the crowd upon the bridge of St. Angelo, and the boats swarming along the Tiber.

Having dropped safely to the full length of my rope, and lighted my allotted share of lamps, I was now sitting in secure enjoyment of this amazing scene. All at once, I felt the rope vibrate. I looked up, saw a man clinging by one hand to the iron rod supporting the *padelle*, and with the other . . . . . Merciful Heaven! It was the Piedmontese firing the rope above me with his torch!

I had no time for thought — I acted upon instinct. It was done in one fearful moment. I clambered up like a cat, dashed my torch full in the felon's face, and grasped the rope an inch or two above the spot where it was burning! Blinded and baffled, he uttered a terrible cry, and dropped like a stone. Through all the roar of the living ocean below, I could hear the dull crash with which he came down upon the leaded roof. Echoing through

I counted twenty-four of the order at table, just now."

The Prior shook his head.

"No, no, Signore," said he. "Twenty-three only."

"But I am positive," said I.

"And so am I," rejoined he, politely but firmly.

I paused. I was certain. I could not be mistaken.

"Nay, *mio padre*," I said; "they were twenty-three at first; but the brother who came in afterwards made the twenty-fourth."

"Afterwards!" echoed the Prior. "I am not aware that any brother came in afterwards."

"A sickly, haggard-looking monk," pursued I, "with singularly bright eyes — eyes which, I confess, produced on me a very unpleasant impression. He came in just before the lights were brought."

The Prior moved uneasily in his chair, and poured out another cup of coffee.

"Where did you say he sat; Signore?" said he.

"In the vacant seat at the lower end of the table, on the opposite side to myself."

The Prior set down his coffee untasted, and rose in great agitation.

"For God's sake, Signore," stammered he, "be careful what you say! Did you — did you see this? Is this true?"

"True?" I repeated, trembling I knew not why, and turning cold from head to foot. "As true as that I live and breathe! Why do you ask?"

"Sickly and haggard-looking, with singularly

bright eyes," said the Prior, looking very pale himself. "Had it — had it the appearance of a young man?"

"Of a young man worn with suffering and remorse," I replied. "But — but it was not the first time, *mio padre!* I saw him before — this afternoon — down near the chestnut-woods, on a knoll of rising ground, overlooking the lake. He was standing with his back to the sunset."

The Prior fell on his knees before a little carved crucifix that hung beside the fireplace.

"REQUIEM ÆTERNUM DONA EIS, DOMINE; ET LUX PERPETUA LUCEAT EIS," said he, brokenly.

The rest of his prayer was inaudible, and he remained for some minutes with his face buried in his hands.

"I implore you to tell me the meaning of this," I said, when he at length rose, and sank, still pale and agitated, into his chair.

"I will tell what I may, Signore," he replied; "but I must not tell you all. It is a secret that belongs to our community, and none of us are at liberty to repeat it. Two years ago, one of our brethren was detected in the commission of a great crime. He had suffered, struggled against it, and at last, urged by a terrible opportunity, committed it. His life paid for the offence. One who was deeply wronged by the deed, met him as he was flying from the spot, and slew him as he fled. Signore, the name of that monk was the Fra Geronimo. We buried him where he fell, on a knoll of rising ground close against the chestnut woods that border

the path to Marino. We had no right to lay his remains in consecrated ground; but we fast, and say masses for his soul, on each anniversary of that fearful day."

The Prior paused and wiped his brow.

"But, *mio padre* . . ." I began.

"This day last year," interrupted he, "one of the woodcutters yonder took a solemn oath that he met the Fra Geronimo on that very knoll, at sunset. Our brethren believed the man — but I, heaven forgive me! was incredulous. Now, however . . ."

"Then — then you believe," faltered I, "you believe that I have seen . . ."

"Brother Geronimo," said the Prior, solemnly.

And I believe it too. I am told, perhaps, that it was an illusion of the senses. Granted; but, is not such an illusion, in itself, a phenomenon as appalling as the veriest legend that superstition evokes from the world beyond the grave? How shall we explain the nature of the impression? Whence comes it? By what material agency is it impressed upon the brain? These are questions leading to abysses of speculation before which the sceptic and the philosopher alike recoil — questions which I am unable to answer. I only know that these things came within the narrow radius of my own experience; that I saw them with my own eyes; and that they happened just forty years ago, on the eleventh of March, anno Domini eighteen hundred and twenty-six.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROFESSOR'S STORY.

BETWEEN eight and ten years ago, I embarked in a long vacation campaign among the Alps of Savoy. I was alone. My object was not amusement, but study. I occupy a Professor's Chair, and I was engaged in the collection of materials for a work on the Flora of the higher Alps; and, to this end, travelled chiefly on foot. My route lay far from the beaten paths and passes. I often journeyed for days through regions where there were neither inns nor villages. I often wandered from dawn till dusk, among sterile steeps unknown even to the herdsmen of the upper pasturages, and untrodden save by the chamois and the hunter. I thought myself fortunate at those times, if, towards evening, I succeeded in steering my way down to the nearest châlet, where, in company with a half-savage mountaineer and a herd of milch goats, I might find the shelter of a raftered roof, and a supper of black bread and whey.

On one particular evening I had gone farther than usual, in pursuit of the Senecio Unifloris: a rare plant, which I had hitherto believed indigenous to the southern valleys of Monte Rosa, but of which I here succeeded in finding one or two indifferent

specimens. It was a wild and barren district, difficult to distinguish with any degree of precision on the map; but lying among the upper defiles of the Val de Bagnes, between the Mont Pleureur and the Grand Combin. On the waste of rock-strewn moss to which I had climbed, there was no sign of human habitation. Above me lay the great ice-fields of Corbassière, surmounted by the silver summits of the Graffenière and Combin. To my left, the sun was going down rapidly behind a forest of smaller peaks, the highest of which, as well as I could judge from Osterwald's map, was the Mont Blanc de Cheilon. In ten minutes more, those peaks would be crimson; in one short half hour, it would be night.

To be benighted on an Alpine plateau towards the latter end of September is not a desirable position. I knew it by recent experience, and had no wish to repeat the experiment. I therefore began retracing my route as rapidly as I could, descending in a north-westerly direction, and keeping a sharp look-out for any châlet that might offer a shelter for the night. Pushing forward thus, I found myself presently at the head of a little verdant ravine, channelled, as it were, in the face of the plateau. I hesitated. It seemed, through the gathering darkness, as if I could discern vague traces of a path trampled here and there in the deep grass. It also seemed as if the ravine trended down towards the upper pastures which were my destination. By following it I could scarcely go wrong. Where there is grass, there are generally cattle and a châlet; and I might possibly find a nearer resting-

place than I had anticipated. At all events, I resolved to try it.

The ravine proved shorter than I had expected, and, instead of leading immediately downward, opened upon a second plateau, through which a well-worn footway struck off abruptly to the left. Pursuing this footway with what speed I might, I came, in the course of a few more minutes, to a sudden slope, at the bottom of which, in a basin almost surrounded by gigantic limestone cliffs, lay a small dark lake, a few fields, and a châlet. The rose-tints had by this time come and gone, and the snow had put on that ghostly grey which precedes the dark. Before I could descend the slope, skirt the lake, and mount the little eminence on which the house stood, sheltered by its background of rocks, it was already night, and the stars were in the sky.

I went up to the door and knocked; no one answered. I opened the door; all was dark. I paused — held my breath — listened — fancied I could distinguish a low sound, as of some one breathing. I knocked again. My second knock was followed by a quick noise, like the pushing back of a chair, and a man's voice said, hoarsely: —

"Who is there?"

"A traveller," I replied, "seeking shelter for the night."

A heavy footstep crossed the floor, a sharp flash shot through the darkness, and I saw, by the flickering tinder, a man's face bending over a lantern. Having lighted it, he said, with scarce a glance

towards the door, "Enter, traveller," and went back to his stool beside the empty hearth.

I entered. The châlet was of a better sort than those usually found at so great an altitude, consisting of a dairy and houseplace, with a loft overhead. A table and three or four wooden stools occupied the centre of the room. The rafters were hung with bunches of dried herbs, and long strings of Indian corn. A clock ticked in a corner: a kind of rude pallet upon trestles stood in a recess beside the fireplace; and through a lattice at the further end, I could hear the cows feeding in the outhouse beyond.

Somewhat perplexed by the manner of my reception, I unstrapped my knapsack and specimen-box, took possession of the nearest stool, and asked if I could have supper?

My host looked up, with the air of a man intent on other things. I repeated the inquiry.

"Yes," he said, wearily; "you can eat, traveller."

With this, he crossed to the other side of the hearth, stooped over a dark object, which until now I had not observed, crouched in the corner, and muttered a word or two of unintelligible patois. The object moaned; lifted up a white bewildered woman's face; and rose slowly from the floor. The herdsman pointed to the table, and went back to his stool and his former attitude. The woman, after pausing helplessly, as if in the effort to remember something, went out into the dairy, came back with a brown loaf and a pan of milk, and set them before me on the table.

As long as I live I shall never forget the expression of that woman's face. She was young, and very pretty; but her beauty seemed turned to stone. Every feature bore the seal of an unspeakable terror. Every gesture was mechanical. In the lines that furrowed her brow there was a haggardness more terrible than the haggardness of age. In the locking of her lips there was an anguish beyond the utterance of words. Though she served me, I do not think she saw me. There was no recognition in her eyes; no apparent consciousness of any object or circumstance external to the secret of her own despair. All this I noticed during the few brief moments in which she brought me my supper. That done, she crept away, abjectly, into the same dark corner, and sank down again: a mere huddled heap of clothing.

As for her husband, there was something unnatural in the singular immobility of his attitude. There he sat, his body bent forward, his chin resting on his palms, his eyes staring fixedly at the blackened hearth, and not even the involuntary quiver of a nerve to show that he lived and breathed. I could not determine his age, analyse and observe his features as I might. He looked old enough to be fifty, and young enough to be forty; and was a fine muscular mountaineer, with that grave cast of countenance which is peculiar to the Valaisan peasant.

I could not eat. The keenness of my mountain appetite was gone. I sat, as if fascinated, in the presence of this strange pair; observing both, and, apparently, by both as much forgotten as if I had never crossed their threshold. We remained thus,

by the dim light of the lantern, and the monotonous ticking of the clock, for some forty minutes or more: all profoundly silent. Sometimes the woman stirred, as if in pain; sometimes the cows struck their horns against the manger in the outhouse. The herdsman alone sat motionless, like a man cast in bronze. At length the clock struck nine. I had by this time become so nervous that I almost dreaded to hear my own voice interrupt the silence. However, I pushed my plate noisily aside, and said, with as much show of ease as I could muster: —

"Have you any place, friend, in which I can sleep to-night?"

He shifted his position uneasily, and, without looking round, replied in the same form of words as before:

"Yes; you can sleep, traveller."

"Where? In the loft above?"

He nodded affirmatively, took the lantern from the table, and turned towards the dairy. As we passed, the light streamed for a moment over the crouching figure in the corner.

"Is your wife ill?" I asked, pausing and looking back.

His eyes met mine for the first time, and a shudder passed over his body.

"Yes," he said, with an effort. "She is ill."

I was about to ask what ailed her, but something in his face arrested the question on my lips. I know not, to this hour, what that something was. I could not define it then; I cannot describe it now; but I hope I may never see it in a living face again.

I followed him to the foot of a ladder at the further end of the dairy.

"Up there," he said; placed the lantern in my hand; and strode heavily back into the darkness.

I went up, and found myself in a long low granary, stored with corn-sacks, hay, onions, rock-salt, cheeses, and farming implements. In one corner were the unusual luxuries of a mattress, a rug, and a three-legged stool. My first care was to make a systematic inspection of the loft and all that it contained; my next, to open a little unglazed lattice with a sliding shutter, just opposite my bed. The night was brilliant, and a stream of fresh air and moonlight poured in. Oppressed by a strange undefined sense of trouble, I extinguished the lantern, and stood looking out upon the solemn peaks and glaciers. Their solitude seemed to me more than usually awful; their silence more than usually profound. I could not help associating them, in some vague way, with the mystery in the house. I perplexed myself with all kinds of wild conjectures as to what the nature of that mystery might be. The woman's face haunted me like an evil dream. Again and again, I went from the lattice to the ladder, and from the ladder back to the lattice, vainly listening for any sound in the rooms below. A long time went by thus, until at length, overpowered by the fatigues of the day, I stretched myself on the mattress, took my knapsack for a pillow, and fell fast asleep.

I can guess neither how long my sleep lasted, nor from what cause I awoke. I only know that my sleep was dreamless and profound; and that I

started from it suddenly, unaccountably, trembling in every nerve, and possessed by an overwhelming sense of danger.

Danger! Danger of what kind? From whom? From whence? I looked round — I was alone, and the quiet moon was shining in as serenely as when I fell asleep. I listened — all was still. I got up, walked to and fro, reasoned with myself; but all in vain. I could not stay the beatings of my heart. I could not master the horror that oppressed my brain. I felt that I dared not lie down again; that I must get out of the house somehow, and at once; that to stay would be death; that the instinct by which I was governed must at all costs be obeyed.

I could not bear it. Resolved to escape, or, at all events, to sell life dearly, I strapped on my knapsack, armed myself with my iron-headed alpenstock, took my large clasp knife between my teeth, and began, cautiously and noiselessly, to descend the ladder. When I was about half-way down, the alpenstock, which I had been keeping studiously clear of the ladder, encountered some dairy vessel, and sent it, clattering, to the ground. Caution, after this, was useless. I sprang forward, reached the outer room at a bound, and found it, to my amazement, deserted, with the door wide open and the moonlight streaming in. Suspecting a trap, my first impulse was to stand still, with my back against the wall, prepared for a desperate defence. All was silent. I could only hear the ticking of the clock, and the heavy beating of my own heart. The pallet was empty. The bread and milk were still standing

where I had left them on the table. The herdsman's stool occupied the same spot by the desolate hearth. But he and his wife were gone — gone in the dead of night — leaving me, a stranger, in the sole occupation of their home!

While I was yet irresolute whether to go or stay, and while I was yet wondering at the strangeness of my position, I heard, or fancied I heard, something — something that might have been the wind, save that there was no air stirring — something that might have been the wailing of a human voice. I held my breath — heard it again — followed it as it died away. . . . I had not far to go. A line of light gleaming under the door of a shed at the back of the châlet, and a cry bitterer and more piercing than any I had yet heard, guided me direct to the spot.

I looked in — recoiled, giddy with horror — went back, as if fascinated; and so stood for some moments, unable to move, to think, to do anything but stare helplessly upon the scene before me. To this day, I cannot recall it without something of the same sickening sensation.

Inside that hut, by the light of a pine-torch thrust into an iron sconce against the wall, I saw the herdsman kneeling by the body of his wife; grieving over her like another Othello; kissing her white lips, wiping blood-stains from her yellow hair, raving out inarticulate cries of passionate remorse, and calling down all the curses of Heaven upon his own head, and the head of some other man who had brought this crime *upon him!* I understood it all

now — all the mystery, all the terror, all the despair. She had sinned against him, and he had slain her. She was quite dead. The very knife, with its hideous testimony fresh upon the blade, lay near the door.

I turned and fled — blindly, wildly, like a man with bloodhounds on his track; now, stumbling over stones; now, torn by briars; now, pausing a moment to take breath; now, rushing forward faster than before; now, battling up-hill with straining lungs and trembling limbs; now, staggering across a level space; now, making for the higher ground again, and casting never a glance behind! At length I reached a bare plateau above the line of vegetation, where I dropped exhausted. Here I lay for a long time, beaten and stupefied, until the intense cold of approaching dawn forced upon me the necessity of action. I rose, and looked round on a scene no feature of which was familiar to me. The very snow-peaks, though I knew they must be the same, looked unlike the peaks of yesterday. The very glaciers, seen from a different point of view, assumed new forms, as if on purpose to baffle me. Thus perplexed, I had no resource but to climb the nearest height from which it was probable that a general view might be obtained. I did so, just as the last belt of purple mist turned golden in the east, and the sun rose.

A superb panorama lay stretched before me, peak beyond peak, glacier beyond glacier, valley and pine forest and pasture slope, all flushed and palpitating in the crimson vapours of the dawn.

Here and there, I could trace the foam of a waterfall, or the silver thread of a torrent; here and there, the canopy of faint blue smoke that wavered upward from some hamlet among the hills. Suddenly my eyes fell upon a little lake — a sullen pool — lying in the shade of an amphitheatre of rocks some eight hundred feet below. Until that moment, the night and its terrors appeared to have passed away like a wicked vision; but now the very sky seemed darkened above me. Yes — there it all lay at my feet. Yonder was the path by which I had descended from the plateau, and, lower still, the accursed châlet, with its background of rugged cliff and overhanging precipice. Well might they lie in shadow! Well might the sunlight refuse to touch the ripples of that lake with gold, and to light up the windows of that house with an illumination direct from heaven!

Thus standing, thus looking down, I became aware of a strange sound — a sound singularly distinct, but far away — a sound sharper and hollower than the fall of an avalanche, and unlike anything that I remembered to have heard. While I was yet asking myself what it could be, or whence it came, I saw a considerable fragment of rock detach itself from one of the heights overhanging the lake, bound rapidly from ledge to ledge, and fall, with a heavy plash, into the water below. It was followed by a cloud of dust, and a prolonged reverberation, like the rolling of distant thunder. Next moment, a dark fissure sprang into sight all down the face of the precipice — the fissure became a chasm — the whole cliff wavered before my eyes — wavered, parted,

sent up a cataract of earth and stones — and slid slowly down — down — down into the valley.

Deafened by the crash, and blinded by the dust I covered my face with my hands, and anticipated instant destruction. The echoes, however, died away and were succeeded by a solemn silence. The plateau on which I stood remained firm and unshaken I looked up. The sun was shining as serenely, the landscape sleeping as peacefully as before. Nothing was changed, save that a wide white scar now defaced all one side of the great limestone basin below, and a ghastly mound of ruin filled the valley at its foot. Beneath that mound lay buried all record of the crime to which I had been an unwilling witness. The very mountains had come down and covered it — nature had obliterated it from the face of the Alpine solitude. Lake and châlet, victim and executioner, had disappeared for ever, and the place thereof knew them no more.

CHAPTER VI.

BRADSHAW THE BETRAYER.

Oh, Dorcles! your praises are too large.
Winter's Tale.

I AM a conscientious traveller, and I believe in Mr. Murray. I visit all the churches, climb all the mountains, admire all the pictures and put up at all the inns which he recommends to my notice. When he predicts that "the traveller will behold with a shudder the boiling torrent which plunges beneath his feet to a depth of, &c. &c.," I peep over the precipice and shudder accordingly. When he kindly observes that "the traveller will here leave the carriage, and, by ascending the bank at the bend of the road, be delighted with a most extensive and beautiful prospect," I get out, and am delighted on the spot. In short, Mr. Murray tells me what is proper to be done, and I do it; which saves a great deal of trouble, and secures me against anything like misplaced enthusiasm.

There was also a time when I believed in Mr. Bradshaw, and pinned my faith upon the "Continental Railway Guide;" but that dream is over. Faithless Bradshaw! an impartial public shall decide our grievance.

It was between four and six years ago. I had been all about the Pyrenees, and a little way into

Spain, and was now jogging homeward by easy stages through the north of France. Travelling alternately by rail and diligence, and occasionally settling down in some large town for the sake of exploring the neighbourhood, I came one day to the city of Abbeville, and took up my quarters at the hotel *Tête de Bœuf*.

"Mine inn" was spacious and gloomy; my bedroom spacious and gloomy; my bed a catafalque with dusty amber satin hangings. There were faded frescos on all the walls. There was a smell of damp earth in all the passages. Everything was dismal. Everything was decaying. The very waiter looked grey and mouldy, as if he had been laid aside somewhere and forgotten, till the moment of my arrival.

I sat down amid my luggage, and sighed. The waiter sighed likewise.

"Anything to be seen in this town?" I asked, despondingly.

The waiter stroked his chin, and eyed me contemplatively.

"The Cathedral, M'sieur."

"Nothing but the Cathedral?"

"The city, M'sieur."

"Oh!" said I, "the Cathedral and the city. Anything else?"

He coughed, dusted a chair, and affected not to hear. I always know what that sort of deafness means. I am a traveller, and used to it. There was a long pause.

"When can I dine?" I inquired at last.

"Table-d'hôte at six, M'sieur," sighed the waiter.

I glanced at my watch, and found that it wanted ten minutes to four.

"Very well," said I, resignedly. "I will stroll about till six."

Whereupon my melancholy friend bowed me downstairs, and into the courtyard.

A few steps brought me to the Cathedral. It was grey and shadowy, and vast, and quite bare of decorations. There was a triangular stand of votive tapers flickering and guttering in one corner, and a very old peasant woman on her knees before the altar. I sat down on a stone bench, and fell into a musing contemplation of the stained glass oriel, and the long perspective of the pillared aisles. Presently the verger came out of the vestry-room. He was a short, plump, inquisitive-looking man, with a loose black gown, and slender black legs; and a pointed nose. He laid his head on one side, looked at me with one glittering eye, and picked his way daintily across the church towards where I was sitting. Altogether he was very like a raven.

"*Bonjour*, Monsieur," said he, with fluent politeness, and just the sort of croaking voice that suited his general appearance. "Monsieur is a stranger. Monsieur admires the Cathedral. *Bien!* Monsieur has discernment, and the Cathedral is superb. We have nothing finer in France, Monsieur. Our tracery is unique; our nave is admirable; our stained glass is of the first quality, and upwards of six centuries old. Before the high altar of this Cathedral, Mon-

sieur, our good King Louis XII., surnamed the father of his people, married Madame la Princesse Mary of England."

"Yes, and died of gaiety and late hours in less than half-a-year," said I. "A pretty lesson to old gentlemen of seventy-three who marry young ladies of nineteen!"

"*Plait-il?*" croaked the verger, greatly puzzled; for this part of the story was not included in his lesson.

"And have you nothing to show?" I asked. "No remarkable tombs? — no pictures? — no statues?"

The verger fixed a knowing eye upon me, and looked more bird-like than ever.

"The treasury, Monsieur; the episcopal jewels; the relics, the inestimable relics! The great toe of Saint Celestine of Cressy, and the tongs with which St. Dunstan took the devil by the nose. Tickets at two francs each."

"Lead the way," said I, pulling out my two francs: "lead the way, and hand over the ticket. Let us see the inestimable relics!"

But instead of leading the way, he drew back, and hesitated.

"Unfortunately," said he, "the treasury cannot be shown to fewer than five persons. If Monsieur has friends in Abbeville, or if Monsieur has no objection to pay for the five tickets——"

"Pay for five tickets, indeed!" I echoed, indignantly. "Ten francs for St. Dunstan's tongs,

and St. Somebody's toe! I would not buy them at the price!"

The verger shrugged his shoulders, and considered.

"There were two pious pilgrims here this morning," he said, "both devoutly desirous of admission. They will return to-morrow; and, if Monsieur will leave me his address, it is possible that we may be enabled, between this and then, to make up the party."

I scribbled the name of my hôtel on the back of my card, left it in his keeping, and wandered out again into the streets.

I cannot say that I was delighted with Abbeville. Mr. Murray did not insist that I should be, and I had left Mr. Bradshaw locked up in my portmanteau. The squares were grass-grown, the canals were foul and weedy, the public buildings were dirty and dilapidated, and the houses all looked as if they had turned their backs to the streets. It may be gloriously picturesque, and I have no doubt that it was a charming town in the estimation of Samuel Prout, Esquire; but, for my own part, I am not enthusiastic about gutters and gables, and object to a population composed exclusively of old women.

I found myself at six o'clock in a desert of dining-room with an oasis of table. I was the only guest. It was a dismal meal; the mouldy waiter attended upon me; and I had bad dreams in the catafalque all night long.

While I was breakfasting the next morning, I

received a message from my friend the verger. Another traveller had turned up; the pilgrims were still anxious for a sight of the relics; and the authorities consented for once to open the treasury-doors in favour of four.

Punctual as I was to the time appointed, the pilgrims were there before me — a pair of stalwart, broad-shouldered, barefooted Capuchins, odorous of garlic and cognac. One had a patch across his eye; the other was lame, and wore a bandage round his ankle. Both kept their hoods well over their faces, and neither was exactly the sort of mendicant that one would prefer to meet towards dusk upon a lonely road among the mountains.

The fourth traveller had not yet arrived; so I returned to the stone seat of yesterday, and the Capuchins paced up and down before the treasury door, conversing in whispers. Thus five — ten — fifteen minutes went by, and the chimes jangled at the quarter.

The pilgrims, who had been glancing up at the clock every half-dozen seconds or so all the time, now grew more and more impatient.

"*Ce diable de voyageur!* will he never come?" was the overloud and somewhat irreverent exclamation of the monk with the patch.

His companion shrugged his shoulders, glanced hurriedly in my direction, and muttered some inaudible reply.

I rose, and went towards them.

"I fear," said I, "that we shall all be disappointed this morning; for the treasury cannot be

seen after midday, and it now wants but twenty minutes to the hour.

The pilgrims groaned, and wagged their heads simultaneously.

"We are poor servants of the church," said the former speaker, crossing himself with great humility. "We are making a pilgrimage to all the *objets saints* of the department. It is a great delay to us, Monsieur — a melancholy delay!"

"And a spiritual privation, Brother Ambroise," added the other, with a profound sigh.

"Aye, a spiritual privation, indeed," echoed Brother Ambroise. "Holy things are meat and drink to miserable sinners such as we."

I murmured a civil assent; but could not help thinking in my own mind that such bulky saints could scarcely be indifferent to meats and drinks of a merely temporal nature.

"Have you been long on this pilgrimage?" I asked, not knowing what next to say.

"Twenty days, Monsieur," replied Brother Ambroise. "Twenty days, during which we have journeyed upon foot, and entirely depended upon the alms of the charitably disposed."

This was a broad hint; but I determined not to observe it.

"Twenty days is a long time," said I. "You must have visited a great many towns, and seen a great many churches, in the course of your journey."

"Oh, a great many — thanks to the holy saints!

a great many," replied the Capuchins, wagging their heads together as before.

"You have been to Amiens, of course?"

They looked at each other, and hesitated.

"Ye — yes, we have been to Amiens," said Brother Ambroise, with another glance at the clock. "And we are on our way to — to —"

"Boulogne," interposed his companion, promptly.

"Exactly so, Brother Paul. To Boulogne — Ah! *les voici!*"

His quick ear had caught the echo of approaching footsteps, and there, sure enough, came the verger, picking his steps up the centre aisle, followed by a slim young gentleman, with fair hair, blue glasses, a note-book, and an umbrella.

The former carried a huge bunch of keys, and proceeded pompously to unlock the treasury door: the latter, who had been the cause of the delay, began murmuring a torrent of explanations and apologies, to which nobody listened. The chimes jangled another quarter — the last bolt was drawn — and in another moment we found ourselves standing in the midst of a large, ill-lighted apartment, surrounded by presses and glass cases, and decorated with a huge black crucifix at the farther end.

"Messieurs — reverend pilgrims," croaked the raven, unlocking press number one, and beginning with a bow to his audience; "you here see the breviary used by his Majesty King Charles X., when he visited our Cathedral in the year 1827, and the cushion pressed by his Majesty's royal knees. Also an embroidered glove worn by his Majesty during

the service, and found near his Majesty's chair, after his Majesty and his Majesty's royal suite had left the church."

"Up — p — pon my word, that's very curious!" ejaculated the slim tourist, who had an impediment in his speech, and was already at work upon the note-book. "I must p — p — put that down. What year did you say — 1527?"

But the raven jingled his keys with dignified indifference, and stalked on to press number two: whereupon 1527 went down as the date of an interesting historical anecdote of the middle ages.

"You now behold," continued he, with a wave of the hand, "the reliquary of St. Celestine de Cressy. This valuable shrine was presented to us in the year 1630, by Monseigneur le Cardinal Richelieu. It is of silver gilt, enriched with precious stones; and measures one foot and a half in length, by eight inches in height. I open the lid, and the object which you perceive enclosed in a small glass box is the most sacred toe of the saint and martyr before-mentioned."

"And what do you suppose it's worth?" asked Brother Ambroise, bending eagerly forward.

"Worth!" croaked the verger, indignantly. "Worth, indeed! Why, 'tis inestimable! Saint Celestine had but one leg at the period of her martyrdom; and that great toe, permit me to tell you, is nothing less than unique!"

"G — g — good gracious!" exclaimed the tourist, scribbling away as fast as his pencil would carry

him. "A saint with one leg, and a lady, too! Wouldn't m — m — m — miss that for the world!"

Press number three was now thrown open, and discovered some four or five shelves, adorned with rich cups, vases, censers, and sacramental vessels. The pilgrims exchanged glances of admiration; the tourist began a fresh page; and the raven flourished his keys more consequentially than ever.

"A cup of rock crystal, with gold cover, supposed to be engraved by Benvenuto Cellini; a statue of St. Barnabas, in solid silver, five inches and a half in height; a very ancient crozier-head, silver gilt; a patera, of antique Byzantine workmanship, enamelled, and of great value. We were offered seven thousand francs for this beautiful work of art, not many years since, but declined to part from it."

The one eye of Brother Ambroise glittered with pious fervour.

"Oh, Brother Paul," said he, emphatically, "is not this a consoling sight? Ought we not to rejoice in the riches of our beloved Church?"

Whereupon Brother Paul cast an enthusiastic glance at the ceiling, struck himself on the breast with both his fists, and said, —

"Aye, indeed, Brother Ambroise; but should we not at the same time be thankful that these things possess no attraction for us? Is it not the glory of our order, that we love poverty better than riches, fasting better than feasting, and wooden platters better than all the gold and silver vessels in the world?"

"Verily we do!" responded Brother Ambroise with a groan of humble satisfaction. "Verily we do!"

Here the verger, who had been listening with his head on one side, drew a deep sigh of admiration, and with especial ceremony unlocked press number four.

"You are now about to see the greatest treasure that we possess," said he; "the crowning glory of our collection, Messieurs — the pride of Abbeville — the envy and delight of surrounding districts!"

The Capuchins uttered a simultaneous "Ah!" and pressed to the front. The raven flung open the doors, pointed to a shapeless fragment of rusty iron reposing on a crimson velvet cushion, fell into an attitude, and in a tone of modest triumph announced —

"The tongs with which St. Dunstan took the devil by the nose!"

The pilgrims drew back in silence. It might be my profane fancy; but they certainly looked disappointed. Not so the energetic tourist. He protested that the thing was "m — m — marvellous!" and entreated five minutes delay, to make a sketch of the interesting object.

The verger consented, a chair was brought, and the artist began.

"If I had but a piece of India-rubber and a d — d — double B!" sighed he.

"I think," observed Brother Paul with great alacrity, "that the gentleman should have more light!

would it not be possible, my son, to draw that blind higher?"

The verger, thus paternally addressed, deposited his keys on the table, muttered something about "notions," mounted a little set of library steps, and complied. At that instant Brother Paul was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and Brother Ambroise, passing beside the table, took the keys up carelessly in his hand.

The blind was obstinate, and, instead of going up, came down with a run. When it was at last arranged, the Cathedral bell was ringing for service, and long before the tourist had shaded his sketch to his own satisfaction, the verger declared that we could stay no longer.

"Let us return thanks to our patron saint, Brother Ambroise!" ejaculated the lame pilgrim; "for our replenishment of spirit has been great."

Whereupon Brother Ambroise devoutly kissed and returned the keys, and gave the verger his blessing.

It was a cheap donation, and neither my stammering countryman nor I got off so easily. The people were assembling for mass as we went out. The Capuchins went one way — the stranger and I another. He was all admiration of what he had seen, what he had not seen, and what he was going to see.

"B — b — beautiful country!" said he. "B — b — beautiful churches — interesting nation! I'm going to P — P — Paris to-morrow."

"Ah," said I with a yawn — "you'll be delighted with Paris."

"I know I shall," replied he. "I'm going to write a b—b—book about it. Good morning!"

"Good morning," said I, and returned to mine inn to breakfast.

Sitting over that desolate meal, I asked myself what was next to be done? Abbeville was "used up." I had seen the Cathedral, and I had seen the town, and even Mr. Murray confessed that the tourist could do no more. I had also an objection to pass another night in the catafalque. To go I had determined; but the question was — where? In this emergency I recollected that I had not yet consulted Mr. Bradshaw, so I sought out the "Continental Railway Guide" from the substrata of my portmanteau, turned to page 185, and read as follows: —

"ABBEVILLE. — A fortified town, containing about 18000 inhabitants, situated on the river Somme, twelve miles from the beautiful and picturesque town of St. Valery-sur-Somme."

"The beautiful and picturesque town of St. Valery-sur-Somme!" I repeated, aloud. "Why, 'tis the very thing! Blessed be the name of Bradshaw — I'll go this afternoon! Waiter — kellner — garçon! What conveyances are there to St. Valery-sur-Somme?"

"To St. Valery?" repeated the waiter, regarding me with an air of melancholy surprise. "Monsieur is going to St. Valery?"

I nodded impatiently.

"Monsieur has friends at St. Valery?"

"Friends! not I."

"Business, perhaps?"

"No — nor business either. I'm going for pleasure — to see the place. How does that concern you, pray?"

The waiter shrugged his shoulders apologetically.

"*Je vous demande pardon, M'sieur.* I — I but inquired. There is nothing to see at St. Valery, M'sieur. Nothing whatever. But M'sieur is the best judge."

I cast an affectionate eye at the "Continental Railway Guide," page 185.

"Nothing to see, indeed!" said I, with quiet triumph. "There are the beauties of nature — there is a picturesque old town — there is exquisite sketching. Bah! I should not wonder if I stayed there till the end of the month!"

The waiter looked down incredulously, and the dismallest ghost of a smile flitted across his countenance. It was evident that *he* had no soul for the picturesque!

"As Monsieur pleases," said he, submissively. "Monsieur was enquiring . . ."

"About the conveyances! Well?"

"Well, Monsieur, there is a passage-boat daily, by the river. That goes at midday. There is also a *cabriolet de poste*. That goes at ten o'clock every morning."

"And there is nothing going this afternoon?"

"Nothing; unless Monsieur chooses a *voiture*

particulière. We have an excellent travelling carriage at Monsieur's disposal."

Having, however, no fancy for a trip *en grand seigneur*, I decided to wait till to-morrow; and so went out to inquire into the comparative merits of the passage-boat and the cabriolet.

There was something very refreshing in the idea of a water journey.

I recalled all my joyous boatings up the Medway and the Thames; my adventures on the Rhine and the Moselle; my feats and failures on the Cam in college days long since gone by; and thus pleasantly running over my "rambles by rivers," made my way towards that part of the Somme called the *Rive des Bateaux.*

It was a dismal spot just within the fortifications. To the left lay the city; to the right, high embankments, a drawbridge, a stretch of flat country, and a long perspective of canal-like river bordered by files of monotonous poplars. The first object that met my eyes was the passage-boat moored up beside a tiny wooden landing-place. It was a heavy, square-built, green and yellow boat, with a dirty little pavilion at the poop. The interior of this pavilion was furnished with benches, and lit by a row of little windows all the way round. On a shelf of deck near the prow sat some three or four grimy men, cooking their dinner over a brazier; and between this shelf and the pavilion the boat was laden with wood, hay, charcoal, and market produce. Altogether it was by no means an inviting conveyance, and looked more like a coal

barge with a shabby omnibus on deck than anything else that I can think of.

While I was yet observing these things, a fat official, with a gold band to his cap, rolled lazily out of a little red bureau attached to the quay, and hung out a tariff of the tolls and rates of conveyance.

"Pray when does this boat leave," I asked; "and how long does it take to go from here to St. Valery?"

The fat official brought a huge cigar out of his pocket, stabbed it deliberately with a pin in two places, and stuck it in his mouth before replying.

"Starts at midday *précis*," said he. "Arrives between six and seven."

"Six hours to travel twelve miles!" I exclaimed. "Surely there must be some mistake!"

"Fourteen miles by the river," replied he, phlegmatically. "Nine stations."

"And the fare?"

"Pavilion, seven francs; deck, four."

I hesitated, looked again at the boat, and thought it uglier and more uncomfortable than before.

"And is the scenery interesting?" I inquired, presently.

"*Plaît-il?*" said the fat official, looking somewhat puzzled.

"The — the river, you know! Is it pretty? Is there anything to see?"

He sucked silently at his cigar, turned a fishy

eye upon me, stared languidly up the stream and down the stream, and finally pointed with his thumb towards the perspective of poplars.

"*C'est bien*," said he, with placid satisfaction; "*c'est très bien, cette rivière-ci.* It is just like this all the way."

"Just like this all the way!" I repeated, drawing a deep breath. "*In*-deed! Then I wish you a very good day."

The official touched his cap with one finger, and closed his eyes, which was the nearest approach to a bow that he could take the trouble to make. Whereupon we parted — that is to say, he remained where he was, and I strode indignantly away.

"I will go by the *cabriolet de poste*," I muttered to myself, as I went along. "I shall go early, and I shall go quickly, and I dare say the road is delightful!"

The *Bureau des Messageries* was just opposite my hotel, and the office was occupied by a very pretty young girl, a cat, and a canary. I took off my hat, and was greeted with a smile and a curtsey.

"Will Mademoiselle be so kind as to inform me of the earliest departure for St. Valery?" I asked, with my best French air and accent.

"The *cabriolet* leaves at ten to-morrow morning, and the fare is eleven francs," replied the young lady, with great politeness.

I laid the money on the table. She entered

my name in the ledger, and handed me a small green ticket.

"Mademoiselle is acquainted with St. Valery?" I ventured timidly to inquire.

Mademoiselle looked down, coquetted with the corner of her apron, and admitted that she had frequently visited the place in question.

"And Mademoiselle was pleased with the town — found it picturesque and agreeable?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and arched her eyebrows as only a Frenchwoman can.

"*Ma foi! non*, Monsieur," said she. "It is *triste* — miserably *triste!*"

"By *triste*," said I, "you would imply retired; but a place may be retired and very lovely at the same time. I have heard that St. Valery is charming."

"*Vraiment?*"

"Ah, Mademoiselle is of a different opinion!"

She smiled, and shook her head with the air of a person who is too polite to offer a contradiction.

"*Pardon*," said she. "I do not doubt that Monsieur's information is correct. Tastes are so different!"

"And appearances so deceptive," added I to myself, as I walked out of the bureau. "That girl is pretty and vivacious; but she has no mind. After all, however, one need never hope to find localities appreciated by those who live upon the spot. The Romans quarried the Coliseum for building materials; and the boatmen who rowed me from Geneva

to Versoix could not tell me the name of Mont Blanc!"

And so the rest of that day went drearily by, and I hated Abbeville, and despised the natives, and loathed the hotel *Tête de Bœuf*, and wearied of the waiter, and almost lost my faith in human nature.

— Bradshaw excepted! Bradshaw to whom I trusted for to-morrow morning's deliverance — Bradshaw whom I never doubted for an instant — Bradshaw the inestimable — Bradshaw the veracious — Bradshaw the ..... Well I won't mind that just at present!

The resignation with which I dined in the desert, and retired once more to rest beneath the funereal amber satin draperies of the catafalque; the cheerful alacrity with which I rose the next morning; and the benevolent frame of mind in which I discharged my bill, and feed the melancholy waiter, can never be described. At a quarter to ten o'clock I despatched my luggage to the bureau, and at ten precisely I followed it.

It was market-day, and the space in front of the hotel was lined with stalls, and thronged with noisy peasants. Stacks of fruit and vegetables obstructed the pavement; rude barrows and *charrettes* blocked up the roadway; the population of old women seemed to have been multiplied by twenty; and high above all the noise and bustle jangled the perpetual chimes. I crossed the street with difficulty, and in the midst of this confusion looked round in search of the *cabriolet de poste*. Save the barrows, the *charrettes*,

and one yellow dilapidated, weather-beaten, perilous-looking cart, with a penthouse roof and a patched leather apron, standing at the corner of the street, there was no kind of conveyance in sight. I wandered into the stableyard of the bureau, but found it empty. I peeped into the office, but saw only the canary. I grew nervous. I began to fear that I had mistaken the hour, and that the *courier* had started without me. In this emergency I addressed myself to a sunburnt stripling who was lolling on a bench outside the door with a pipe in his mouth, and a short thong-whip across his knees. He looked about sixteen, was very shabby and ragged, wore *sabots* and no stockings, and had little gold rings in his ears.

"Can you tell me," said I, "if the *cabriolet* has started?"

"Will start as soon as ever the letters come up from the station," said he, pointing with his pipe to the cart at the corner. "There it stands."

"That rickety old *charrette!*" I exclaimed. "That the government mail! Impossible!"

The boy grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll complain to the authorities," I continued, indignantly. "Eleven francs to ride twelve miles in such a wretched concern as that! Why, it's an imposition; and — and — where can I find the *courier?*"

The boy knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"I am the *courier*," said he, very coolly; "and if you're the passenger for St. Valery, you'd better take your seat; for here come the letters."

As he spoke, the railway omnibus rumbled round

the corner. I had no resource but to obey; so I scrambled up as best I could, and found myself condemned to a cushionless bench about six inches in width, and the society of a very little boy with the hooping cough. In another moment the letter-bag was tossed in — the *gamin courier* seized the reins, uttered a wild whoop, and sprang upon the shafts — the omnibus-driver favoured us with a cut of his whip — the idlers gave a delighted shout — the old market-women scrambled out of the way — and off we rattled at full speed over the stones.

Whoop! Sacr-r-r-r-re! the *gamin* flourishes his whip — the harness-bells jingle — the hotel *Tête de Bœuf* is left far behind — and the grey old mountainous Cathedral is out of sight in no time.

Whoop! Sacr-r-r-r-re! Through the market-place — up one street, down another, and over a dangerous old wooden bridge that groans and creaks beneath our wheels! Now we pass the boundary of the fortifications, and enter upon a dreary, straggling suburb, that seems to get longer the further we go; and now, as we draw near the barrier where he must pause for the "*visite*," our charioteer subsides into a state of comparative tranquillity, and our speed slackens. The presentation of a paper, the peering in of a mustachioed gendarme, and the perilous introduction of a bayonet close beside my legs, constitutes the "*visite*;" after which we go on at a much slower pace than before.

We are now in the open country, and jogging along a straight sandy road, bordered by poplars and pollards — the very twin brother to the un-

inviting canal of yesterday. The country round is wide and waste, and the little farmhouses are scattered thinly here and there. Sometimes we pass a wagon with the driver dozing in his place — sometimes a country girl in a cloak and hood, or a weather-beaten old *cantonnier* at work upon the road. The heat becomes almost intolerable, and before we have travelled a couple of miles we are powdered over with a fine white dust that is especially tormenting. Then the little boy drops off into an uneasy sleep, and has to be propped up with my portmanteau; and the *gamin*, who is taking it very easily just now, and allowing the horse to go at his own pace, dangles his legs lazily to and fro, lights his pipe, pulls out a wellworn and very greasy-looking letter, and begins to read. He continues in this state of quiescence for a mile or more, till the drowsy influences of the scene begin to tell upon myself. Then, just as I also am beginning to nod, he starts into a state of frantic animation, yells, cracks his whip, urges his horse to a shambling gallop, plunges round the corner of the road and through the main street of a village that has hitherto lain unseen behind the hill, and so pulls up before the door of the single *auberge*, with the air of one who has driven hard all the way, and exhausted himself in the service of an ungrateful government.

Thus, at an intermittent pace which is alternately furious or funereal according as we approach a village or traverse a lonely country road, we journey on our way. By-and-by the landscape grows more and more desolate; the heat more and more oppressive.

dreary sandhills and undulating sweeps of furzy common succeed to the fields and farms about Abbeville. Habitations become fewer and farther between. Vegetation almost ceases. The horse's feet sink deep at every step, and the drifting sand-dust swirls up in our faces with every hot gust of the north-east wind.

We have been four hours and a half upon the road already; it is close upon three o'clock; and a long hill glares before us in the sun.

"From the top yonder," says the *gamin* composedly, "we shall come in sight of the sea."

"The sea! Is St. Valery near the sea?"

"*Mais certainement.* Did not Monsieur know that?"

I did not know it; and I am not pleased to know it. I am not fond of the sea-side. I hate bathing. I am not clever at coast scenery, and I never could draw a boat in my life. Altogether I begin to have misgivings on the subject of what I have come to see; and when we do reach the top of the hill and I catch a glimpse of that glittering line that bounds the horizon like a silver scimitar, I turn away mine eyes in disgust, and feign a sulky sleep.

The feigned sleep merges insensibly into a real one, from which I am by-and-by awakened by more yelling and whooping on the part of the driver, by the headlong jolting of the *cabriolet*, and by the transition from a soft dusty road to the rough pavement of a town.

It is a street bordered by houses on one side and

a quay on the other. The houses are of the poorest, and the population of the shabbiest description. The town consists of a single irregular street, about a mile in length, and the prevailing trade appears to be in cockles and cordage. At the farther extremity, on a little sandy eminence, stands a small grey-steepled church, surmounted by a forlorn wooden telegraph that has long fallen into disuse, and still points upwards with one lank arm, like a skeleton of ill-omen. The river at this point almost ceases to be a river, and widens out between low sandy banks to its junction with the sea. The opposite shore is so far distant that only the ghostly outline of a lighthouse and some trees is visible; and between that shore and St. Valery stretches such a dreary waste of mud, slime, and sand as I have never seen in my life before or since. Imagine the mouth of the Nore with the tide out and all the water gone, save a narrow current which ripples along a groove in the midst of the river-bed, and you will at least have formed some vague notion of the aspect of St. Valery at low water.

Moored beside the quays, or hauled up high and dry on the banks farther down, lie merchant-vessels, barks, and fishing-boats, of various builds and sizes. Some are undergoing repairs; some are being laden, some unladen; and round about them all, in every stage of idleness or activity, swarm scores of rough, weatherbeaten seamen, with big boots, Guernsey shirts, and little gold rings in their brown ears.

Seeing, but scarcely noting these things at the moment, I am jolted along, between the ships and

the houses, and set down, half awake, before the door of an inn. It is but a mean *auberge*, though the best in the place, and it bears the sign of the *Lion d'Or*. I turn to the waiter, who lolls carelessly against the door, and signify my intention of remaining for the night. But he, instead of responding with that cheerful alacrity which one is accustomed to expect, only shakes his head, and surveys me and my luggage with superb indifference.

"Our rooms," says he, loftily, "are all engaged. Monsieur will probably find accommodation at the *Couronne*."

This is discouraging; but I compromise the matter by arranging to dine at the *Lion d'Or* at six o'clock, even though I have to seek a bed elsewhere. Hereupon the waiter unbends, the *gamin* gets his *pourboire*, the cabriolet clatters away at full speed; and, after a brief rest and hasty lunch, I stroll out to see the town, and beat up my quarters at the *Couronne*.

Alas! the *Couronne* was an *auberge* infinitely smaller, meaner, and dirtier than the *Lion d'Or*, situated close behind the strand, at some distance from the quays. There was a gaunt flagstaff planted in the dreary little garden at the back, and a pile of shells, broken bottles, and vegetable refuse before the door. The public room was full of seafaring men — the landlord himself looked like a retired smuggler — the atmosphere of the house was suggestive of tar, tobacco, and cognac — and there was a tiny model of a frigate over the fireplace of the tap-room. Altogether *La Couronne* was about the

last inn in France which I should voluntarily have chosen for a night's lodging; but there was no help for it.

Here, then, I found myself forced to apply for accommodation. The landlord was too busy with his customers to attend to me, and the landlady referred me to a deaf old *fille de chambre*, as withered and weird as one of Macbeth's witches.

"A bed?" said she, peering and blinking in my face, and holding one hand hollowed over her ear. "Ay, to be sure! Two, if you please — two, if you please!"

"*Merci*, one will be enough. Can I see the room?"

She nodded, stumped upstairs slowly before me, in her heavy *sabots*, and led the way into a large, cold, comfortless chamber, which contained two beds, and looked as if it had not been occupied for months.

"Have you no other room than this?" I asked, shivering.

"Yes, it is rather chilly," mumbled the *fille de chambre*; "but Monsieur can have a fire in the stove."

"Very well," said I, resignedly; "I shall be in about nine or ten o'clock."

"Three francs a night, and fifty centimes for attendance. Does Monsieur prefer the bed next the door, or the bed next the fire?"

"Either: if I have but the room to myself. Remember, if you please, that I pay for both these beds."

"Good: the bed next the door. Monsieur may rely upon it that everything shall be as comfortable as possible." And the old woman blinked cunningly to herself, in the full persuasion that she had not betrayed her deafness by a single blunder.

More disconsolate than ever, I parted from her with a nod and a trifling gratuity, and made my way out as quickly as I could, turning my face inland, and leaving the town at my back. But landwards or seawards, it was all dreary alike! A boat-building yard; a weir; the mouth of another poplar-bound canal; a few heavy, round-shouldered trading smacks lying up sideways on the slimy shore; a knot of barefooted women washing linen; a rope-walk; another miserable *cabaret*; and a cluster of fishermen's hovels . . . . these were all the sights and incidents that I beheld by the way. I went up to the weir, and sat down upon a line of stone parapet. I looked to the right — land, sand, poplars, a canal, and universal flatness! I looked to the left — strand, sand, mud, houses, boats, and universal flatness! I thought of Abbeville with tender regret; I sighed for the hotel *Tête de Bœuf*; I could have embraced the mouldy waiter! Then — then I turned to Bradshaw, Bradshaw the betrayer, and upbraided him bitterly.

"Is this," I exclaimed, opening the "Continental Railway Guide," page 185, "is this 'the beautiful and picturesque town of St. Valery-sur-Somme,' which you, and you alone, O faithless one! have induced me to visit?

Oh, Bradshaw! I believed thee true,
And I was blest in so believing;
But now I mourn . . . . ."

I broke off abruptly. My feelings would not allow me to continue; and as it was by this time approaching six o'clock, I rose and went back moodily to dinner.

I have no wish to preserve either a record or a recollection of that dismal meal; but surely that bill of sixteen francs must lie heavily upon the conscience of mine host of the *Lion d'Or!*

A bottle of indifferent Bordeaux; a copy of the '*Moniteur*' four days old; a couple of cigars; and a pleasant game at billiards in the public room, with an intelligent young Breton, who told me that he was a commercial traveller, helped to pass away the remainder of the evening, and, for a while, to divert my attention from the subject of my night's lodging. As the hours progressed, however, I could not help thinking of it, and the later it grew the more reluctant I became. The truth was that I had taken an almost childish aversion, not only to my room at the *Couronne*, but to the situation of the inn itself, to its landlord, its frequenters, and its ancient *fille de chambre*. I reasoned with myself in vain; the feeling was strong upon me, and at eleven o'clock, when my new acquaintance bade me good night, and the rest of the guests dispersed, I had more than a half a mind to pass the night upon a sofa at the *Lion d'Or*, and have nothing whatever to say to the room which I had already engaged. But I was

ashamed to confess my weakness, and so the condescending waiter bowed me out.

The moon had now risen, and the tide was coming in fast. Already the narrow current had expanded into a broad, shining stream; and some of the farthest boats, which in the afternoon had lain sprawling on the mud like stranded whales, were riding buoyantly at anchor. The night was lovely, and I would fain have lingered out for some time longer, but that I feared to find the doors of mine inn closed against me. It was a needless precaution. The night-trade of *La Couronne* seemed to be in even a more flourishing state than that of the day; and what with the singing, and laughter, and smoking that was going on in the taproom, I could find no one to attend to me, so quietly possessed myself of a candle and stole up to my room.

The fire had been lighted, and was almost out, and the chamber looked almost as comfortless as ever. My first proceeding was to lock myself in; but the key was rusty and would not turn, and there was no bolt anywhere: my next was to draw the blinds, pile more wood upon the embers, and make myself as comfortable as circumstances would allow. It was a long time before I could overcome my uneasiness sufficiently to go to bed, and even then I only took my boots and cravat off, and lay down in my clothes.

A lonely waterside inn — a gang of riotous revellers — a door that could not be secured! Do what I would, I could not keep from thinking of this; or, if I did succeed for a few moments, it was

only to dwell upon something still worse. I recalled all the dreadful tales I had ever read, or heard, of double-bedded rooms, and midnight murders, and unknown bodies drifted out to sea. I recollected one story of a bed that sank through the floor, and another of a bed that smothered its occupant by means of a descending tester. I wondered if anybody had ever died in this one, or if, by the flickering fire-light, I should presently see a pale face staring at me from between the curtains of the other. In short, I was thoroughly nervous, and had suffered my imagination to run upon ghosts, "deadly murder, spoil, and villany," till at last I was fain to draw the counterpane over my head, and count scores of imaginary sheep till I fell asleep.

I dreamt; but except that it was painful and confused, I have no recollection of my dream. Neither do I know how long I slept. It may have been but a few minutes, and it may have been an hour; but when I woke, it was with an instantaneous summoning of all my self-possession, and with the consciousness of a human presence in the room. To lie quite motionless, and leave the counterpane still shrouding up my head and face was the result of my first impulse — to listen breathlessly, my second.

A heavy footstep crossing the floor — a candle set down roughly on the table — the drawing up of a chair beside the fire — and a prolonged yawn, convinced me that the intruder was alone. Presently he threw a fresh log on the fire, and soon after that an odour of coarse tobacco filled the room.

At this point, having overcome my first terrors, I felt a strong inclination to make known my presence; but, somehow, I hesitated, and, half in curiosity, half in apprehension, lay still and listened.

Thus a quarter of an hour or more went by, and some revellers from the inn parlour went out, singing, and shouted a noisy farewell to those who remained behind. Then a clock struck on the landing, and my unknown visitor, after shuffling restlessly in his place, got up, and paced to and fro between the window and the door. By-and-by he opened the casement, and leaned out; whereupon I ventured to lift a corner of the quilt; for what with the mildness of the night, the heat of the fire, and the oppressive closeness of my concealment, I was almost smothered. A breath of cool air, however, and one glimpse of a bulky, broad-shouldered man in a loose pea-coat and woollen cap, was all that I could obtain. Scarcely had he looked out when he exchanged a hurried greeting with some one down below.

"Come up," I heard him say. "Come up. All's safe here!"

With this he closed the window — I cowered down beneath the counterpane — a second heavy footfall came creaking up the stairs, and another man entered the room.

"All right?" asked the first comer, eagerly; and, strange to say, I seemed to have heard his voice before.

"All right," replied the other, depositing some heavy burthen on the floor, and drawing a deep

breath of relief. "But I've had to walk more than a mile, *et ça pèse comme le diable!*"

"And you met no one?"

"*Parbleu!* I came face to face with a *sergent de ville* just against the landing-place yonder; but I touched my cap, and he said 'Good night,' and I went my way, and he went his. There's nothing to fear, if we can only drop out to sea before daybreak!"

"Yes — but it wants an hour still to high tide, and they've moored her so close in shore that only the high tide will float her! Cursed fools that they were!"

"And we must wait here another hour?"

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* there's no help for it!"

The new comer struck the table heavily with his fist, and muttered a string of oaths, half of which were wholly unintelligible to me. Somehow, his voice, as well as his companion's, struck upon my ear with a familiarity that urged my curiosity to the keenest pitch. If I might only trust to the gloom of this part of the room, and venture on another peep! Just as I was about to dare it, the second stranger spoke again.

"Have you nothing to drink?" said he, moodily.

"Drink!" echoed the other; "I should think so, indeed! why, mate, here's a flask of the real old Schiedam, if that will content you!"

A growl of satisfaction, a deep-drawn breath, and a hearty smack of the lips, was the reply that followed. I could resist no longer. I drew the

quilt down gently to the level of my eyes, held my breath, and looked out.

They were both seafaring men, and the second wore much the same kind of dress as the first — a costume which is conventionally adopted by stage-smugglers, but which in actual life is chiefly confined to the seamen of French and Dutch trading smacks, and to our own north-coast fishers. The first comer sat with his back to me; but the other, who was now returning the flask across the table, had his face turned straight towards me. It was a tawny, sullen countenance, and one that I felt certain I had seen before. When had we met, though? And where? These were difficult questions, and the longer I looked, the more I became puzzled to answer them. It was like a face seen in a dream, but only half remembered — strange, and yet familiar — like and unlike at the same time!

I was not long left in doubt, however; for his companion took the flask, held it to the light to see how much of the liquor was gone; nodded solemnly, and said; "Here's to your spiritual glorification, Brother Ambroise!" and drank a deep draught out of the bottle!

This sally evoked a hoarse laugh from both, under cover of which I ventured to shift my position, so as to conceal myself still more effectually. These, then, were my friends the pious pilgrims of the day before yesterday! I recognised them well enough now — Brother Paul was the first, and Brother Ambroise, who had miraculously recovered the sight of his left eye, was the second. I am

bound to confess that this discovery affected me with a very unpleasant sensation all down my back, and caused a rushing noise in my ears that obliterated for some seconds every other sound.

When I next looked up, Paul was bending eagerly forward, and Ambroise was lifting a carpet-bag from the floor to the table.

"If the *sergent de ville* had asked to see what was in this," said he, unbuckling the straps at the mouth of the bag, "I should not have wished him good night quite so civilly!"

"What would you have done?" inquired Paul, with a grim chuckle.

"Brained him," was the brief but significant reply.

I turned cold all over.

The last buckle was now undone. Ambroise plunged in his arm, and brought out a silver cup.

"That's worth having," said Paul, weighing it in his hand with the air of a connoisseur; "and the Schiedam would taste well out of it — eh, mate?"

"Better out of this," growled the other, producing a superb gold tazza with a jewelled lid. "Diable! how that red stone sparkles at the top!"

He held it at arm's length, admiringly, till his companion lost patience, and snatched it from his hand.

"Go on, can't you!" said he sharply. "What comes next? Where's the gold box? That's the best of the lot, and I put it in myself while you

were after the candlesticks. Hah! there it is — there it is! Set it on the table."

My head swam — I could not believe my eyes! Was it — yes, it was indeed the precious shrine of St. Celestine de Cressy, presented in 1630 by Cardinal Richelieu!

I understood it all now — remembered all, even to the manner in which the verger's keys had been handled by Brother Ambroise. They had robbed the Cathedral!

"Well, what next?"

"Nothing now," said Ambroise gruffly, sweeping the cups back into the bag and packing away the shrine on the top of them. "The tide must be up by this time, and — *Holà!* whose boots are these?"

"Boots!" exclaimed the other, who had gone over to the window. "Boots! What do you mean?"

"Mean!" echoed Ambroise, snatching the candle from the table, and crossing the room at a single bound. "Death of my life! there's a man in the bed!"

As long as I live I shall never forget the horror of that moment. To keep my eyes closed, to regulate the rising and falling of my breath, and to preserve an utterly passive expression of face and attitude, was the result of an instinct beyond myself. My power of thought was for the moment annihilated; and I feigned sleep as the spider feigns death, almost without knowing how or why I did it.

"He's asleep," said Paul.

"He's acting," said Ambroise, and flashed the candle before my eyes.

Not a nerve quivered. I seemed endued with a supernatural mastery over every fibre of my frame, and never flinched, though the effort was agony.

"It's very well done," said Ambroise, between his teeth; "but it's not real. No man could have slept through the noise we've made."

"Yes he could, if he'd been drinking," replied Paul. "Don't you see he has gone to bed in his clothes, and isn't that a proof of the state he was in when he came up?"

"Proof or no proof," said Ambroise, with a terrible imprecation, "I'll —"

He broke off abruptly, and I heard a click, like the opening of a clasp-knife.

At this moment I gave myself up for lost, and a dead cold gathered at my heart. Then Paul interposed again.

"Give me the knife," I heard him say. "I'll test him, and then ..."

His voice dropped to a whisper; there was a muttered argument; a pause; a moment of maddening suspense! Then the quilt was pulled back, a hot breath ruffled the hair upon my brow, and a keen, cold, deadly edge, fine as the edge of a razor, was drawn slowly across my throat.

The quiver of an eyelid, the flutter of a breath would have betrayed me; but the love of life was stronger than the fear of death, and, thank God! I lay passive and placid as before.

Paul burst into a loud laugh, and tossed the knife back to its owner.

"*Ivre-mort, pardieu!*" said he. "I'd as soon suspect the walls of listening!"

Ambroise muttered an angry oath, and turned away.

"You're too easy," he said, sullenly. "There's nothing like a dead man's tongue to keep a secret!"

At this moment, a long shrill whistle echoed under the window, like the wail of a Banshee.

"The signal," cried both, in a breath. Ambroise shouldered the bag; the light was blown out; in their eagerness to be gone all else was forgotten; and the next instant I heard their footsteps tramping down the stairs!

* * * * * *

The story of the robbery at Abbeville needs no further repetition from my pen; but to those who are not familiar with the particulars it may be interesting to add that none of the stolen treasure was ever recovered, and neither of the dexterous pilgrims seen or heard of more. The robbery was committed on the evening of their flight, and of my trying adventure at St. Valery. It was supposed to have been done about nine o'clock. The church was entered from a window overlooking a patch of waste ground beside the canal — a spot of which I still have a sketch in my possession. The keys by which they unlocked the presses were found in the corridor close by; and a locksmith living somewhere in the suburbs of the town testified to having innocently manufactured them from some wax impressions intrusted to him by two holy pilgrims, one of whom was lame, and the other blind of an eye. From the

description which I was enabled to give of both these individuals, it was conjectured that they were two brothers of the name of Carpeaux, natives of Hâvre, who had been more than once convicted of petty misdemeanours, and were supposed of late years to be connected with the coast-smuggling of France and Holland. Whether they prospered on their sacrilegious gains, time and chance can alone determine. For my part, I expect that they will come to the galleys some day, and that we shall then hear more about them.

In the meantime, suffer me, O Reader, to whisper a word of advice at parting. If thou art at home, by all means stay there. It is the safest and happiest place in the world, depend on it. But if, like me, thou hast the Continental mania, then do as I do. Believe in Mr. Murray — never try to find out anything for yourself — and avoid Bradshaw the Betrayer!

CHAPTER VII.

TWO NEW-YEAR'S DAYS.

I AM the organist of St. Martha-cum-Silvermere, a little quiet church, in a little quiet town, some five-and-forty miles north-east of London. It is not a very brilliant appointment — thirty pounds a year, and a small old-fashioned house to live in. But I can exist upon it. I have a few pupils; a gratuity from the Vestry on Christmas-Day and Good Friday; and, above all, a sincere love for my art. Besides, do I not posses a first-class certificate of merit from the Musical Academy of Zollenstrasse, in the Duchy of Zollenstrasse-am-Main, where I received my professional education? Do I not rejoice in the possession of that famous complimentary letter addressed to me by the wife of the Town-Councillor Von Stumpf? Am I not the proud and fortunate competitor who carried off those two bronze medals, and that faded laurel-wreath, which were awarded at the three grand examinations, and which now adorn the mantelshelf of my little parlour?

The worst part of it is, that I have no one to whom I can show these trophies excepting my little pupils, and my child-servant. I am very lonely. How it happens that I possess no friends or kindred in all my native England is of no importance here. My residence abroad, and my foreign education,

have something to do with the matter, and .... But I will not enter upon that subject. It is painful to look back upon a home and social circle broken up — upon a sunny childhood faded — upon parents lost, but unforgotten: and, moreover, these things have absolutely nothing to do with my story.

Yes, I am lonely; and, for one still warm of heart, it seems a strange, cold fate enough. Yet my life is not without its pleasures. I like my little church, with its carven tombs, and Gothic crypt, and monumental brasses. I am interested in the aged sexton, and in his long, prosy tales of the De Lacy family, whose tattered banner hangs above the old oak sculpture near the altar-rails. I am attached to the little, rosy-faced rustics of the Sunday-school, who come every Wednesday to the Church, that I may train their sweet infant voices in those chants and psalm-tunes which they sing during the services of the Sabbath. Above all, I love my quaint old organ, up in the dark nook over the church door. I love its triple row of black keys, its obsolete stops, its curiously-carved music desk, and the little gilded angels with trumpets and violoncellos which are perched so uneasily on the top, and "pipe to the spirit-ditties of no tone."

It is true that the organ is not perfect; nay, I must confess that it is, in many respects, a somewhat eccentric instrument. There is a trumpet-stop in the great organ which always plays a tone and a half too high, and which I have not dared to use for the last two years. The pedals are so worn down by the friction of more than a century, that they are

reduced to the thinness of laths, and many of them are dumb. And there is something odd the matter with the bellows, so that the wind comes with a puffy, intermittent sound, as if the organ were asthmatic — a defect which is peculiarly annoying, as it makes the children laugh, and spoils the effect of my most brilliant passages. However, I am a constant little woman in my attachments, and I love the organ dearly for all that.

Silvermere is a very pleasant place in the summer time; and, though I always find plenty to occupy my time and my thoughts, I certainly feel happier then than during any other period of the year. I have my walks in the fields and by the river side; my long practices in the empty church, when the mellow evening sunlight comes streaming through the oriel window, and glinting all along the pillared aisle; my garden to cultivate; and my little vases on the chimney-piece all filled with fresh, sweet flowers. But sometimes I find the winters linger very drearily. Mind, I do not complain. I have my books and my fireside, and many, many comforts, for which I am grateful; yet the long, dark evenings do seem heavy to me at times, and the brightest fire loses half its cheerfulness when one has to sit by it alone. Of all days in the year, New-Year's-day seems the loneliest and dreariest to me. I had been accustomed, while in Germany, to see this anniversary merrily celebrated, and had borne my share in the gifts, good wishes, balls, and pleasant social festivities with which the Germans usher in the great Birthday and the new-born year.

It is no wonder I should now feel sad when all Silvermere is gay; when London friends come down to spend their winter holidays with our townsfolk; when joyous parties are taking place night after night all around me; and I alone receive no loving smiles, no gentle greetings from any human creature.

It seems strange that none of the inhabitants of this town have noticed or befriended me. The Rector is always kind, but his wife is far too haughty to speak to me; and the rest of our little aristocracy, the lawyer's, doctor's, and squire's families follow her example. With the tradespeople I am, in my turn, too proud to associate; and thus I have neither friend nor acquaintance. I know that I am not a prepossessing person. I have not the gift of pleasing where I choose. I am silent, and distant, and plain; but oh! I know how full my heart is of love and charity, and how it yearns for something to lean upon and cherish! But there are none who care to read that heart, and none for it to love.

But it was not always thus — there was once....

It was a long time ago. I had been about four years in England, and scarcely two at Silvermere. I was quite young then, and not so plain, and pale, and taciturn as I am now. The organ, too, was not so asthmatic as it is at present.

I saw him first at church. How well I remember it! It was towards the autumn. The weather was gloriously beautiful; and the days were so long and calm that life seemed twice its usual length. The afternoon service was just about to commence — in fact, I was playing the opening voluntary — when

one of the school children stole round softly to my elbow, and whispered: —

"Please, ma'am, there's a strange gentleman in the church!"

A stranger amid a country congregation is an event, and an important one. He attracts more attention than the sermon, and, in the eyes of the children, eclipses the beadle himself.

It was my duty to keep the little urchins in order, so I shook my head gravely, and said, "Hush! don't talk in church," and went on with my voluntary.

"Please, ma'am, he looks like a Frenchman, or — or a Turk!"

This last suggestion was hazarded dubiously, and followed by a peep between the faded curtains that hid me from the congregation. Now a peep between the curtains was a liberty, and an act of insubordination which I never would permit; so I turned round very sharply, and tried to assume an exceedingly angry countenance.

"Sarah Wilson," I said to the offender, "go back to your place directly, and pay attention to the service. It is of no consequence to you who is, or is not, in the church!"

Sarah Wilson retreated to her seat in disgrace; but I am forced to confess that I was myself guilty of the offence for which I had punished her, for I could not resist peeping through the curtains as soon as the sermon began.

He was sitting in the farther corner of a pew midway between the altar and the door, and leaning

back in such a manner that I could see his pale face and his large dark eyes distinctly. His clothes were of a foreign make and style; his hair was long, and fell in careless masses about his face; and it was probably his large moustache that caused the child to take him for a Frenchman "or a Turk." His face was more intellectual than handsome; and I could not help fancying, as I looked at him, that he must be fond of music.

Somehow, I took especial pains with my concluding voluntary that afternoon, and it was wonderful how long it took me to select one from amongst the piles of music in the corner. First I fixed upon a fugue of Sebastian Bach's; then upon a "Gloria" by Mozart; then upon a movement from the "Mount of Olives." At last I chose the Hallelujah Chorus in the "Messiah" (the most divine piece of music in the world), and played it with all my heart. Indeed, I entered into it with so much enthusiasm and pleasure, that, until I had concluded, and chanced to see him standing there in his place alone in the church, looking up earnestly towards the organ, I had forgotten all about the foreign stranger.

Of course I drew back directly, and busied myself in putting away the music, and locking the organ doors, and when I looked round again, he was gone.

I saw no more of him, heard no more of him — yet I could not keep from thinking of him all the week, and wondering whether he would return on the following Sunday. I fancied that he would — indeed, so certain of it was I, that, when I found

him occupying his former place before any one else had entered the church, I felt no surprise at it.

This time, he not only remained listening to my playing after the rest had dispersed, but waited beside the porch till I came out.

"Permit me to thank you, lady, for your beautiful music," he said, courteously. "It is long since I have heard such playing."

I blushed, bowed, and passed on; but his words rung in my ears for days after. I was almost angry with myself for thinking of him so much; but his look, the tone of his deep voice, the hesitating accent with which he spoke, haunted me strangely. I did not think that he was a foreigner; it seemed to me more as if he had lived much abroad. As for his age, it was perhaps thirty or thirty-five. He might be younger; but the gravity of his manner gave him the appearance of a man in the prime of life.

For two or three more Sundays this continued. He contrived each time to address me, but always with profound respect. I came, by-and-by, almost to live upon these weekly meetings; and, I fear, thought of little else from Sabbath to Sabbath.

I met him one morning by the river side. It was my favourite walk; and, though the autumn was far advanced, it was not yet too cold to stroll, book in hand, through the green meadows and under the alders beside the water's edge.

He spoke to me — he walked beside me — he talked of music, of books, of rural life. He told me he was an author; and spoke of the lands he

had visited, and the scenery through which he had passed. I listened in a kind of dream. I had never before heard so eloquent a voice. His every word sank into my heart, and warmed my imagination. He said he would lend me a book which he had written, and would bring it next morning to the meadow in which we had met. I made an effort to refuse it, but he over-ruled my objections and — I went.

Let me pass over the weeks that followed. Let me not dwell upon the frequency of our after-meetings — the charmed eloquence of his speech — the rapt and humble delight with which I listened and learned. His books were grave and full of thought — far more profound than any I had attempted to read before that time. Yet I strove to comprehend his philosophy, and pored over the pages night after night that I might be able to speak of them with him, and render myself worthier of his friendship.

Ay! his friendship — for he never spoke to me of love. Yet I loved him — loved him timidly, reverently, as a child might have loved! The very touch of his hand when we met and when we parted, made me tremble — the merest glance from his calm eyes seemed to blind and trouble me. Had they once looked upon me in anger, I felt as if I must have fallen at his feet and died.

It was wrong, foolish, childish — what you will; but it was not surprising that I should so worship the first who had been kind and gentle

with me. Remember — I was so young, so lonely, so in need of affection and support!

The winter came, and there were many days of rain and snow when I could not venture out; and those were melancholy days for me — yet sometimes, even then, he would not suffer them to go by without once seeing my face, and would walk patiently up and down the road in front of my little cottage, till I chanced to look from the window.

Then came Christmas time, and he told me that he must go to London for some days to visit his friends. He parted from me very coldly and gravely, as was his wont; but, when he had gone a little distance, came back, and, saying that he should return on New-Year's-day, lifted my hand suddenly to his lips, and turned away.

It was the first token of love that he had shown for me — the very first! Sometimes, it is true, I had fancied I observed a deeper thrill in his voice, a darker fire in his eyes — but it was so fleeting that I had scarcely dared to frame it into words; and, after all, it might have been fancy only. But this kiss! this burning kiss upon my hand! I hastened home; and, entering my little parlour, kissed my own hand over and over again where his lips had rested upon it.

I do not now remember any of those days between Christmas-day and the last day of the old year. They glided past me like the pictures of a magic lantern, and I lived as one dreaming. Nothing seemed as it was before. People's faces passing in the street, looked more cheerful; the wintry land-

scape was beautiful in my eyes; the sound of my own voice, as I used to sit singing softly to myself, appeared to have grown sweeter with my happiness.

Then came the thirty-first of December. To-morrow! oh, to-morrow I should see him again. My heart beat strangely when I thought of that; and I so longed to greet the day and year which would herald in my golden future, that I resolved to sit by my fireside and hear the clocks strike twelve.

It was a very cold and silent night. My little house stands just on the outskirts of the town, and the far fields beyond the hedge were covered with deep snow. I drew the curtains close, piled a blazing fire, and tried to read. It was useless. I could not fix my thoughts that night. There was a strange, restless, expectant feeling upon me; and as the evening hours went by, I became nervous and agitated.

All at once I felt that he was there, and I trembled. I had heard no sound; I had received no warning of his coming; and yet I knew that he was standing yonder, outside the window.

What awful mysterious sympathy was that which I then experienced, and which occurs to all of us at some time or other during life?

I rose, went over, and drew the curtain. Merciful Heaven! the promptings of my heart were right — he was standing close beside the lattice, and the moonlight was shining down upon his face!

"Alice!" he said softly. "Alice!"

I opened the window, and leaned out into the cold night.

"I said I would be here on New-Year's-day," he said, and his voice was agitated and broken. "It will be New-Year's-day in a few moments more. I have travelled miles that I might see you. I come to say good-bye!"

I would have spoken; but the words died away upon my lips. I could only clasp my hands silently together.

"I have received news of my brother's illness," he continued; "that brother in Madeira, of whom I have told you. I must go to him; but I will write to you by the first ship. I felt I must speak to you again before I left. I could not go without saying how I love you! Hark!" he said, pausing suddenly, and lifting his finger. "They are tolling out the year!"

And the low solemn tones of the bells of St. Martha came moaning through the night.

"The year is almost gone, Alice! Tell me, before it is past, that you love me!"

"I do love you."

The church clock now began to strike.

"I shall be home again before long, Alice. Promise me that you will be my bride before these clocks strike out a year again!"

"I promise."

The clock was still striking.

He grasped the vine with both his hands, and climbed up to the window where I stood.

"Kiss me, Alice — kiss me on the lips before I go! I must be in London by daylight; and the

chaise waits for me in the road. One kiss, my life! — one kiss at parting!"

He was hanging to the window by his hands; I laid mine upon them, for he could not remove them to clasp my fingers in his; and then, bending down, I kissed him for the first and only time.

At that instant, the joy-bells rang out their merry chimes like a chorus of laughing voices — his hands slipped away beneath mine — he dropped down upon the snowy path below, and, crying aloud to me, "A happy new year, my darling," ran swiftly along the road, and disappeared.

How long I stood there at the open window listening to the bells, I know not; but when I returned to my seat, the fire had gone out, and the candle was expiring in the socket.

I have but little more to tell; and yet I feel that I would fain write on and on, and still defer the story of my sorrow. But it must be said, and a very few words will suffice to relate it.

The promised letter never came.

The weary, weary months passed by; the spring-time came and went; the golden summer brought its flowers, the autumn its fruits; and yet I never heard from him. Life grew stale and heavy for me; hope died slowly from my heart; a dull, listless melancholy took possession of my whole soul; and I only wished to die.

Then the winter came again with all its varied aspects, and my only comfort was in wandering where I had wandered a year since with him — in recalling each word that he had uttered — in

reading once more each book that I had read with him. Christmas-day passed by. If I had had any hope left, it faded from me when this day was past; "for surely," I thought, "were he still alive, he would have written to me now."

The New-Year's-eve was come again; a foggy, misty night, unlike the last. I was sitting by my fireside with my head buried in my hands, too miserable for tears, when a letter was brought to me — a letter written in an unknown hand; a letter which had been directed and re-directed many times, and which bore the postage marks of many places. A dread came upon me, for I felt that here was something concerning him whom I loved. For several moments I dared not open it, and having opened it, it was some time before I dared to read it. This was what it told me: —

"MADAM, — It has devolved upon me to inform you of the painful intelligence of the death of Mr. B——, of ——. He was taken seriously ill during the voyage to Madeira, and expired before we reached the port of Funchal. I enclose a piece of his hair and this ring, which he was in the habit of wearing.

"I am, Madam, &c., &c."

You see that my story is but a common-place one, after all; but perhaps, now that you have heard it, you will not be surprised when I say that New-Year's-day was the happiest, and is the most sorrowful of my life.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PAINTER OF ROTTERDAM.

My father was a trader and distiller at Schiedam, on the Maas. Without being wealthy, we enjoyed the means of procuring every social comfort. We gave and received visits from a few old friends; we went occasionally to the theatre; and my father had his tulip-garden and summer-house at a little distance from Schiedam, on the banks of the canal which connects the town with the river.

But my father and mother, whose only child I was, cherished one dream of ambition, in which, fortunately, my own tastes led me to participate: they wanted me to become a painter. "Let me but see a picture by Franz Linden in the gallery at Rotterdam," said my father, "and I shall die happy." So, at fourteen years of age, I was removed from school, and placed in the classes of Messer Kesler, an artist living at Delft. Here I made such progress, that by the time I had reached my nineteenth birthday, I was transferred to the *atelier* of Hans van Roos, a descendant of the celebrated family of that name. Van Roos was not more than thirty-eight or forty years of age, and had already acquired a considerable reputation as a painter of portraits and sacred subjects. There was an altar-piece of his in one of our finest churches; his

works had occupied the place of honour for the last six years at the annual exhibition; and for portraiture he numbered among his patrons most of the wealthy merchants and burgomasters of the city. Indeed, there could be no question that my master was rapidly acquiring a fortune commensurate with his popularity.

Still he was not a cheerful man. It was whispered by the pupils that he had met with a disappointment early in life — that he had loved, had been accepted, and, on the eve of marriage, was rejected by the lady for a more wealthy suitor. He came from Friesland, in the north of Holland, when a very young man. He had always been the same gloomy, pallid, labour-loving citizen. He was a rigid Calvinist. He was sparing of domestic expenditure, and liberal to the poor: — this every one could tell you, and no one knew more.

The number of his pupils was limited to six. He kept us constantly at work, and scarcely permitted us to exchange a word with each other during the day. Standing there among us so silently, with the light from above pouring down upon his pallid face, and, becoming absorbed in the sombre folds of his long black dressing-gown, he looked almost like some stern old portrait himself. To tell the truth, we were all somewhat afraid of him. Not that he assumed any undue authority: on the contrary, he was stately, silent, and frigidly polite; but his politeness had in it something oppressive, and we were all happier out of his presence. None of us resided under his roof. I had a second floor in a

neighbouring street, and two of my fellow-students occupied rooms in the same house. We used to meet at night in each other's chambers, and make excursions to the exhibitions and theatres; and sometimes, on a summer's evening, we would hire a pleasure-boat, and row for a mile or two down the river. We were merry enough then, and not quite so silent, I promise you, as in the gloomy studio of Hans van Roos.

In the meantime, I was anxious to glean every benefit from my master's instructions. I improved rapidly, and my paintings soon excelled those of the other five. My taste did not incline to sacred subjects, like that of Van Roos; but rather to the familiar rural style of Berghem and Paul Potter. It was my great delight to wander along the rich pasture-lands; to watch the amber sunset; the herds going home to the dairy; the lazy windmills; and the calm clear waters of the canals, scarcely ruffled by the passage of the public *treckschuyt.** In depicting scenes of this nature —

> The slow canal, the yellow-blossomed vale,
> The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail —

I was singularly fortunate. My master never praised me by word or look; but when my father came up one day from Schiedam to visit me, he drew him aside and told him, in a voice inaudible to the rest, that "Messer Franz would do credit to the profession;" which so delighted the good distiller, that he straightway took me out with him for

* Canal boat.

the day, and, having given me fifteen gold pieces as a testimony of his satisfaction, took me to dine with his friend the burgomaster, Von Gael. It was an eventful visit for me. On that evening I first fell in love.

Few people, I think, would at that time have denied the personal attractions of Gertrude von Gael; yet I do not know that it was so much her features as her soft voice and gentle womanly grace that fascinated me. Though so young, she performed the honours of her father's princely table with self-possession and good-breeding. In the evening she sang some sweet German songs to her own simple accompaniment. We talked of books and of poetry. I found her well read in English, French, and German literature. We spoke of art; and she discovered both judgment and enthusiasm.

As we took our leave at night, the burgomaster shook me warmly by the hand, and told me to come often. I fancied that Gertrude's blue eyes brightened when he said it, and I felt the colour rush quickly to my brow as I bowed and thanked him.

"Franz," said my father, when we were once more in the street, "how old are you?"

"Just twenty-two, sir," I replied, rather surprised at the question.

"You will not be dependent on your brush, my boy," continued my father, as he leaned upon my arm and looked back at the lofty mansion we had just left. "I have been neither wasteful nor unsuc-

cessful; and it will be my pride to leave you a respectable income at my death."

I inclined my head in silence, and wondered what would come next.

"Burgomeister von Gael is one of my oldest friends," said my father.

"I have often heard you speak of him, sir," I replied.

"And he is rich."

"So I should suppose."

"Gertrude will have a fine fortune," said my father, as if thinking aloud.

I bowed again, but this time rather nervously.

"Marry her, Franz."

I dropped his arm, and started back.

"Sir!" I faltered, "I — I — marry the Fräulein von Gael!"

"And pray, sir, why not?" said my father curtly, stopping short in his walk, and leaning both hands upon the top of his walking-stick.

I made no reply.

"Why not, sir?" repeated my father very energetically. "What could you wish for better? The young lady is handsome, good-tempered, educated, rich. Now, Franz, if I thought you had been such a fool as to form any other attachment without..."

"Oh, sir, you do me injustice!" I cried. "Indeed, I have done nothing of the kind. But do you think that — that she would have me?"

"Try her, Franz," said my father good-humouredly, as he resumed my arm. "If I am not very much mistaken, the burgomeister would be as well

pleased as myself; and as for the fraülein — women are easily won."

We had by this time reached the door of the inn where my father was to sleep for the night. As he left me, his last words were: —

"Try her, Franz — try her."

From this time I became a frequent visitor at the house of the Burgomaster von Gael. It was a large old-fashioned mansion, built of red brick, and situated upon the famous line of houses known as the Boompjes. In front lay the broad river, crowded with merchant vessels, from whose masts fluttered the flags of all the trading nations of the world. Tall trees, thick with foliage, lined the quays, and the sunlight flickered through their leaves upon the spacious drawing-rooms of Gertrude's home.

Here, night after night, when the studies of the day were over, I used to sit with her beside the open window, watching the busy crowd beneath, the rippling river, and the rising moon that tipped the masts and city spires with silver. Here we read together from the pages of our favourite poets, and counted the first pale stars that trembled into light.

It was a happy time. But there came at last a time still happier, when, one still evening as we sat alone, conversing in unfrequent whispers, and listening to the beating of each other's hearts. I told Gertrude that I loved her; and she, in answer, laid her fair head upon my shoulder with a sweet confidence, as if content so to rest for ever. Just as my father had predicted, the burgomaster readily

sanctioned our betrothal, specifying but one condition, and this was that our marriage should not take place till I had attained my twenty-fifth year. It was a long time to wait; but I should by that time, perhaps, have made a name in my profession. I intended soon to send a picture to the annual exhibition — and who could tell what I might not do in three years to show Gertrude how dearly I loved her!

And so our happy youth rolled on, and the quaint old dial in Messer von Gael's tulip-garden told the passage of our golden hours. In the meantime, I worked sedulously at my picture. I laboured upon it all the winter; and when spring-time came, I sent it in, with no small anxiety as to its probable position upon the walls of the gallery. It was a view in one of the streets of Rotterdam. There were the high old houses with their gables and carven doorways, and the red sunset glittering on the panes of the upper windows — the canal flowing down the centre of the street — the white drawbridge, with a barge just passing underneath — the green trees deep in shadow, and the spire of the Church of St. Lawrence rising beyond, against the clear warm sky. When it was quite finished and about to be sent away, even Hans van Roos nodded a cold encouragement, and said that it deserved a good position. He had himself prepared a painting this year, on a more ambitious scale and a larger canvas than usual. It was a sacred subject, and represented the Conversion of St. Paul. His pupils admired it warmly, and none more than myself. We all pronounced it to be

his masterpiece, and the artist was evidently of our opinion.

The day of exhibition came at last. I had scarcely slept the previous night; and the early morning found me, with a number of other students, waiting impatiently before the yet unopened door. When I arrived, it wanted an hour to the time, but half the day seemed to elapse before we heard the heavy bolts give way inside, and then forced our way through the narrow barriers. I had flown up the staircase, and found myself in the first room, before I remembered that I should have purchased a catalogue at the door. I had not patience, however, to go back for it; so I strode round and round the room, looking eagerly for my picture. It was nowhere to be seen; and I passed on to the next. Here my search was equally unsuccessful.

"It must be in the third room," I said to myself, "where all the best works are placed! Well, if it be hung ever so high, or in ever so dark a corner, it is, at all events, an honour to have one's picture in the third room!"

But, though I spoke so bravely, it was with a sinking heart I ventured in. I could not really hope for a good place among the magnates of the art; while in either of the other rooms there had been a possibility that my picture might receive a tolerable position.

The house had formerly been the mansion of a merchant of enormous wealth, who had left it, with his valuable collection of paintings, to the State. The third room had been his reception-chamber, and

the space over the magnificently carved chimney was assigned, as the place of honour, to the best painting. The painter of this picture always received a costly prize, for which he was likewise indebted to the munificence of the founder. To this spot, my eyes were naturally turned as I entered the door. Was I dreaming? I stood still — I turned hot and cold by turns — I ran forward. It was no illusion! There was my picture, my own picture, in its little modest frame, installed in the chief place of the gallery! And there, too, was the official card stuck in the corner, with the words "PRIZE PAINTING," printed upon it in shining gold letters. I ran down the staircase and bought a catalogue, that my eyes might be gladdened by the confirmation of this joy; and there, sure enough, was printed at the very commencement: "ANNUAL PRIZE PAINTING — *View in Rotterdam*, No 127 — FRANZ LINDEN." I could have wept for delight. I was never tired of looking at my picture. I walked from one side to the other — I retreated — I advanced closer to it — I looked at it in every possible light, and forgot all but my happiness.

"A very charming little painting, sir," said a voice at my elbow.

It was an elderly gentleman, with gold spectacles, and an umbrella. I coloured up, and said falteringly —

"Do you think so?"

"I do, sir," said the old gentleman. "I am an amateur — I am very fond of pictures. I presume that you are also an admirer of art?"

I bowed.

"Very nice little painting, indeed; ve-ry nice," he continued, as he wiped his glasses, and adjusted them with the air of a connoisseur. "Water very liquid, colours pure, sky transparent, perspective admirable. I'll buy it."

"Will you?" I exclaimed, joyfully. "Oh! thank you, sir!"

"Oh," said the old gentleman, turning suddenly upon me and smiling kindly, "so you are the artist, are you? Happy to make your acquaintance, Messer Linden. You are a very young man to paint such a picture as that. I congratulate you sir: and — I'll buy it."

So we exchanged cards, shook hands, and became the best friends in the world. I was burning with impatience to see Gertrude, and tell her all my good fortune; but my new patron took my arm, and said that he must make the tour of the rooms in my company; so I was forced to comply.

We stopped before a large painting that occupied the next best situation to mine: it was my master's work, the Conversion of St. Paul. While I was telling him of my studies in the atelier of the painter, a man started from before us, and glided away; but not before I had recognised the pale countenance of Van Roos. There was something in the expression of his face that shocked me, something that stopped my breath, and made me shudder. What was it? I scarcely knew; but the glare of his dark eyes and the quivering passion of his lip haunted me for the rest of the day, and came back again in my dreams.

I said nothing of it to Gertrude that afternoon, but it had effectually sobered my exultation. I dreaded, next day, to return to the studio; but, to my surprise, my master received me as he never had received me before. He advanced, and extended his hand to me.

"Welcome, Franz Linden," he said, smiling; "I am proud to call you my pupil."

The hand was cold — the voice was harsh — the smile was passionless. My companions crowded round, and congratulated me; and in the warm tones of their young, cheerful voices, and the close pressure of their friendly hands, I forgot all that had troubled me in the manner of Van Roos.

Not long after this event, Gertrude's father desired to have her portrait painted — to console him for her absence, he said, when I should be so wicked as to take her away from him. I recommended my old master, whose tutelage I had recently left; and Van Roos was summoned to fulfil a task that I would gladly have performed, had it been in my power to do so. But portraiture was not my line. I could paint a sleek, spotted milch cow, or a drove of sheep, far better than the fair skin and golden curls of my darling Gertrude.

She could not endure the artist from the first. In vain I reasoned with her — all was of no use; and she used to say, at the end of every such conversation, that she wished the portrait were finished, and that she could no more help disliking him than — than she could help loving me. So our arguments always ended with a kiss.

ut this portrait took a long time. Van Roos in general a rapid painter; yet Gertrude's like- progressed at a very slow pace, and, like Pene- s web, seemed never to be completed. One ing I happened to be in the room — a rare t at that time, for I was hard at work upon my landscape; and I was struck by the change had come over my late master. He was no er the same man. There was a light in his eye, a vibration in his voice, that I had never ob- ed before; and when he rose to take leave, s was a studied courtesy in his bow and manner took me quite by surprise.

Still, I never suspected the truth, and still the rait was as far as ever from being finished.

It all came out at last; and one morning Hans Roos made a formal offer of his hand and heart. ourse, he was refused.

"But as kindly as was possible, dear Franz," said, when she told me in the evening; "because s your friend, and because he seemed to feel it leeply. And — and you don't know how dread- y white he turned, and how he tried to restrain tears. I pitied him, Franz — indeed, I was very y!"

And the gentle creature could scarcely keep n weeping herself as she told me.

I did not see Van Roos for some months after disclosure. At last I met him accidentally in t of the stadthouse, and, to my surprise, for the nd time in his life, he held out his hand.

"A good day to you, Messer Linden," said he.

"I hear that you are on the high road to fame and fortune."

"I have been very prosperous, Messer van Roos," I replied, taking the proffered hand. "But I never forget that I owe my present proficiency to the hours spent in your atelier."

A peculiar expression flitted over his face.

"If thought that," said he, hastily, "I ... I should esteem myself particularly happy."

There was so odd a difference in the way in which he uttered the beginning and end of this sentence — so much hurry and passion in the first half, such deliberate politeness in the last, that I started and looked him full in the face. He was as smiling and impenetrable as a marble statue.

"I, too, have been fortunate," he said, after a moment's pause. "Have you seen the new church lately built near the east end of the Haring-vliet?"

I replied that I had observed it in passing, but had not been inside.

"I have been entrusted," he said, "with the superintendence of the interior decorations. My 'Conversion of St. Paul' is purchased for the altar-piece, and I am now engaged in painting a series of frescoes upon the ceiling. Will you come in one day, and give me your opinion upon them?"

I professed myself much flattered, and appointed to visit him in the church on the following morning. He was waiting for me at the door when I arrived, with the heavy keys in his hand. We passed in, and he turned the key in the lock.

"I always secure myself against intruders," he

aid, smiling. "People will come into the church if leave the doors unfastened; and I do not choose o carry on my art, like a signpainter, in the preence of every blockhead who chooses to stand and tare at me."

It was surprising in what a disagreeable manner his man shewed his teeth when he smiled.

The church was a handsome building, in that talian style which imitates the antique, and prefers race and magnificence to the dignified sanctity of he Gothic order. A row of elegant Corinthian olumns supported the roof at each side of the nave; ilding and decorative cornices were lavished in very direction; the gorgeous altar-piece already occupied its appointed station; and a little to the left of the railed space where the communion-table was o be placed, a lofty scaffolding was erected, that eemed, from where I stood, almost to come in contact with the roof, and above which I observed the yet unfinished sketch of a masterly fresco. Three or four more, already completed, were stationed at regular intervals, and some others were merely outlined in charcoal upon their intended site.

"Will you not come up with me?" asked the painter, when I had expressed my admiration sufficiently; "or are you afraid of turning giddy?"

I felt somewhat disinclined to impose this trial on my nerves, but still more disinclined to confess it; so I followed him up from flight to flight of the frail structure, without once daring to look down.

At last we reached the summit. As I had supposed, there was not even room enough for the artist

to assume a sitting posture, and he had to paint while lying on his back. I had no fancy to extend myself on this lofty couch; so I only lifted my head above the level of his flooring, looked at the fresco, and descended immediately to the flight below, where I waited till he rejoined me.

"How dangerous it must be," said I, shuddering, "to let yourself down from that abominable perch!"

"I used to think so at first," he replied, "but I am now quite accustomed to it. Fancy," said he, approaching close to the edge of the scaffolding — "fancy falling from here into the church below!"

"Horrible!" cried I.

"I wonder how high it is from the level of the pavement," continued Van Roos musingly; "a hundred and eighty feet, I daresay — perhaps two hundred."

I drew back, giddy at the thought.

"No man could survive such a fall," said the painter, still looking over. "The thickest skull would be dashed to atoms on the marble down there."

"Pray, come away," said I, hastily. "My head swims at the very idea."

"Does it?" said he, turning suddenly upon me with the voice and eye of a fiend — "does it? Fool!" he cried as he seized me round the body in his iron clasp — "fool, to trust yourself here with me — me whom you have wronged, whose life you have blasted! — me whom you have crossed in fame

ove! Down, wretch, down! I've vowed to
ur blood, and my time has come!"
ickens me even now to recall that desperate
. At the first word, I had sprung back and
ı beam above my head. He strove to tear
ɑ it. He foamed at the mouth; the veins
ɛe knots upon his forehead; and still —
I felt my wrists strained and my fingers
lacerated — still I held on with the terrible
of one who struggles for dear life. It lasted
ime — at least it seemed long to me — and
folding rocked beneath our feet. At length
ıis strength failing. Suddenly I loosed my
ɑd threw my whole weight upon him. He
ɔd — he shrieked — he fell!
·opped upon my face in mute horror. An
silence seemed to elapse, and the cold dews
pon my brow. Presently I heard a dull
'ar below. I crawled to the brink of the
ng, and looked over — a shapeless mass was
ɑ the marble pavement, and all around it
with blood.
ıink an hour must have elapsed before I
ımmon courage to descend. When, at length,
ɔd the level ground, I turned my face from
as so near my feet, and tottered to the door.
·embling hands and misty eyes, I unlocked
rushed into the street.

was many months before I recovered from the
fever brought on by that terrible day. My
, I have been told, were fearful; and had

any doubt existed in the minds of men as to which of us two had been the guilty one, those ravings were alone sufficient to establish my innocence. A man in a delirious fever is pretty sure to speak the truth. By the time I was able to leave my chamber, Gertrude also had grown pale and spiritless, and all unlike her former self. Rotterdam was insupportable to me. I found myself a hero of romance; a lion; a thing to be stared after wherever I went — all of which only served to shatter my nerves still more. In short, change of air and scene was recommended for us both; so we thought we could not do better than marry, and take our wedding tour for the sake of our healths. And I assure you, reader, it did us both a great deal of good.

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE AND MONEY.

is a charming place. It lies about twelve
the south-east of Coblentz, in the valley of
n, — that miniature Rhine, all bordered
hards and vineyards, and steep wooded hills.
n consists of one irregular line of hotels and
houses, with the mountains at the back, the
front, and long double rows of acacias and
planted at each side of the carriage-way.
of donkeys with gay saddles, attended by
in blue blouses and scarlet-trimmed caps,
neath the trees, soliciting hire. The Duke
au's band plays alternate selections from
, Italian, and French music in the public
Fashionable invalids are promenading.
is going forward busily in the Conversation-
ike daily and nightly. Ladies are reading
nd eating ices within hearing of the band;
, with coloured-glass tumblers in their hands,
the Kurhaus, where the hot springs came
up from their nauseous sources down in
vaulted galleries filled with bazaar-like
ungers, touters, and health-seekers. All is
, indolence, and flirtation.
Ems, therefore, came the Herr Graff von
g — or, as we should say, the Count von

Steinberg — to drink the waters, and while away a few weeks of the summer season. He was a tall, fair, handsome young man; an excellent specimen of the German dragoon. You would never have supposed, to look at him, that illness could have brought him to Ems; and yet he suffered from two very serious maladies, both of which, it was to be feared, were incurable by any springs, medicinal or otherwise. In a word, he was hopelessly in love, and desperately poor. The case was this: — His grandfather had left a large property, which his father, an irreclaimable gamester, had spent to the uttermost farthing. The youth had been placed in the army, through the interest of a friend. His father was now dead; the inheritance for ever gone; and he had absolutely nothing beyond his pay as a captain of dragoons, and the distant prospect of one day retiring with the title and half-pay of major. A sorry future for one who was disinterestedly and deeply in love with one of the richest heiresses in Germany!

"Who marries my daughter will receive with her a dowry of 200,000 florins, and I shall expect her husband to possess, at the least, an equal fortune."

So said the Baron of Hohendorf, in cold reply to the lover's timid declaration; and with these words still sounding in his ears, weighing on his spirits, and lying by day and night heavily upon his heart, came the Count von Steinberg to seek forgetfulness, or, at least, temporary amusement, at the Brunnen of Ems. But in vain. Pale and silent, he roamed

restlessly to and fro upon the public promenades, or wandered away to hide his wretchedness in the forests and valleys round about. Sometimes he would mingle with the gay crowd in the Kurhaus, and taste the bitter waters; sometimes linger mournfully round the tables of the gaming company, gazing enviously, yet with a kind of virtuous horror, at the glittering heaps of gold, and the packets of crisp yellow notes which there changed hands so swiftly and in such profusion. But Albert von Steinberg was no gambler. He had seen and experienced the evil of that terrible vice too keenly already in his own father, to fall a prey to it himself. Years ago, he had vowed never to play; and kept his oath. Even now, when he found himself, as it might happen now and then, looking on with some little interest at the gains and losses of others, he would shudder, turn suddenly away, and not return again for days. Nothing could be more regular than his mode of life. In the morning he took the waters; at noon he walked, or read, or wrote; in the evening he strolled out again and heard the band, and by the time that all the society of the place was assembled in the ball-room or at the tables, he had returned to his quiet lodgings, and, perhaps, already gone to bed, in order that he might rise early the next morning to study some scientific work, or take a pedestrian excursion to the ruins of some old castle within the limits of a long walk.

It was a dull life for a young man — especially with that sweet, sad recollection of Emma von Hohendorf pervading every thought of the day. And all

because he was poor! Was poverty a crime, he asked himself, that he should be punished for it thus? He had a great mind to throw himself off the rock where he was standing — or to precipitate himself into the river, if it were deep enough — or to go to the baron's own castle-gate, and shoot himself — or — or, in short, to do anything desperate, if it were only sufficiently romantic; for his hot young German head, full of sentiment and Schiller, would be content with nothing less than an imposing tragedy.

He thought all this, sitting in a little fantastic summer-house perched high up on a ledge of steep rock just in front of the gardens and public buildings. He looked down at the gay company far beneath, and he heard the faint music of the royal band. The sun was just setting — the landscape was lovely — life was sill sweet, and he thought that he would not commit suicide that evening, at all events. So he went moodily down the winding pathway, across the bridge, and, quite by chance, wandered once more into the Conversation Haus. The gaming was going on, the glittering gold pieces were changing hands, the earnest players sitting round as usual. The sight only made him more unhappy.

"Two hundred thousand florins!" he thought to himself. "Two hundred thousand florins would make me the happiest man on earth, and I cannot get them. These men win and lose two hundred thousand florins ten times over in a week, and think nothing of the good, the happiness, the wealth that sum would be to numbers of their fellow-creatures. What a miserable dog I am!"

And he pulled his hat on fiercely, folded his arms, and strode out of the rooms, taking the road to his own lodging with so dismal an air that the people in the streets turned and looked after him, saying, "He has lost money — we saw him come out of the gaming-rooms."

"Lost money!" muttered he to himself, as he went into his garret and locked the door. "Lost money, indeed! I wish I had any to lose."

And poor Albert von Steinberg fell asleep, lamenting that the age of fairies and gnomes had passed away.

His sleep was long, sound, dreamless — for young men, in spite of love and poverty, sleep pleasantly. He woke somewhat later than he had intended, rubbed his eyes, yawned, looked hazily at his watch, lay down again, once more opened his eyes, and at last sprang valiantly out of bed.

Is he still dreaming? Is it an hallucination? Can he be mad? No, it is real, true, wonderful! There upon the table lies a brilliant heap of golden pieces — hard, ringing, real golden pieces, and he turns them over, weighs them in his hands, lets them drop through his fingers to test the evidence of his senses.

How did they come there? That is the important question. He rings the bell violently, once — twice — thrice. The servant runs up, thinking some dreadful accident has occurred.

"Some one has been here to call upon me this morning?"

"No, Monsieur."

"Indeed! Somebody, then, has been upstairs since I have been asleep."

"No, Monsieur."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, Monsieur."

"Now speak the truth, Bertha; some one has been here. You are paid to deny it. Only tell me who it was, and I will give you double for your information."

The servant looked both alarmed and astonished.

"Indeed there has not been a soul. Does monsieur miss anything from his apartment? Shall I send for the gens-d'armes?"

The count looked searchingly in the girl's face. She seemed wholly sincere and truthful. He tried every means yet left — adroit questions, insinuations, bribes, sudden accusations; but in vain. She had seen no one — heard no one. The door of the house was closed, and had not been left open. No one — absolutely no one — had been there.

Puzzled, troubled, bewildered, our young friend dismissed her, believing, in spite of his surprise, the truth of what she stated. He then locked the door and counted the money.

Ten thousand florins! not a groschen more or less!

Well, it was there; but whence it came remained a mystery.

"All mysteries clear themselves up in time," said he, as he locked the money in his bureau. "I daresay I shall find it all out by-and-by. In the meantime I will not touch a single florin of it."

He tried not to think of it, but it was so strange a thing that he could not prevent it running in his head. It even kept him awake at night, and took away his appetite by day. At last he began to forget it; at all events, he became used to it, and at the end of a week it had ceased to trouble him.

About eight days from the date of this occurrence he woke, as before, thinking of Emma, and not at all of the money, when, on looking round, lo! there it was again. The table was once more covered with glittering gold!

His first impulse was to run to the bureau in which the first ten thousand florins were stored away. Surely he must have taken them out the night before, and forgotten to replace them. No, there they lay in the drawer where he had hidden them, and there upon the table was a second supply, larger, if anything, than the first!

Pale and trembling, he turned them over. This time there were some notes — Prussian and French — mingled with the gold. In all, twelve thousand florins.

He had locked his door — could it be opened from without by a skeleton key? He had a bolt fixed within, that very day. Honest Albert Von Steinberg! he took as much pains against fortune as others do against robbery!

Two days later, however, his invisible benefactor came again; and this time he found himself fourteen thousand florins the richer. It was an inexplicable prodigy! No one could have entered by the bolted door, or from the window; for he lived in a garret

on the fourth story — or by the chimney, for the room was heated by a stove, the funnel of which was no thicker than his arm? Was it a plot to ruin him? or was he tempted by the powers of evil? He had a great mind to apply to the police, or to a priest (for he was a good Catholic), — still he thought he would wait a little longer. After all, there might be more unpleasant visitations!

He went out, greatly agitated, and walked about the entire day, pondering this strange problem. Then he resolved, if ever it recurred, to state his case to the *chef de police*, and to set a watch upon the house by night.

Full of this determination, he came home and went to bed. In the morning, when he woke, he found that Fortune had again visited him. The first wonder of the thing had now worn off; so he rose, dressed himself, and sat down leisurely to count the money over, before lodging his declaration at the *bureau de police*. While he was engaged in making up little rouleaux of gold, twenty in each rouleau, there came a sudden knocking at his door.

He had no friends in Ems. He started like a guilty man, and threw an overcoat hastily upon the table, so as to conceal the gold. Could it be that this summons had anything to do with the money? Was he suspected of something that —. The knock was repeated, this time more imperatively. He opened the door. It was the Baron Von Hohendorf!

"How! The Baron Von Hohendorf in Ems! I am rejoiced — this honour — I — pray be seated."

The poor young dragoon's heart beat so fast, and he trembled so with pleasure, hope, and astonishment, that he could scarcely speak.

The baron looked at him steadily, but sternly; thrust back the proffered chair; and took no notice of the extended hand.

"Yes, Herr Count," he said drily. "I arrived yesterday in this place. You did not expect to see me."

"Indeed, no. It is a pleasure — a — delight — a . . . ."

He was so agitated that he forgot his visitor was standing, and sat down; but rose again directly.

"And yet I saw you, Herr Count, yesterday evening, as you came out of the Conversation-rooms."

"Me? Indeed, sir, I never visited the Conversation-rooms at all yesterday; but I am very sorry that I was not there, since I should have had the honour of meeting you."

"Pardon me, Herr Count, I saw you. It is useless to argue the point with me, for I stood close behind your chair for the greater part of an hour. Do you know why I am here this morning in your apartment?"

The young man blushed, faltered, turned pale. He knew but one reason that could have brought a visit from the baron. Had he relented? Could it be his generous design to make two lovers' hearts happy by granting that consent which he formerly refused? There were things more impossible. The baron was capable of such goodness! Something to

this effect he stammered in broken sentences, his eyes fixed upon the ground, and his hands playing nervously with a pen.

The baron drew himself to his full height. If he had looked stern before, he looked furious now. For a few moments he could hardly speak for rage. At last his wrath broke forth.

"Impertinence such as this, Herr Count, I did not expect! I came here, sir, to give some words of advice to your father's son — to warn — to interpose, if possible, between you and your destruction. I did not come to be insulted!"

"Insulted, baron?" repeated the young man, somewhat haughtily. "I have said nothing to call for such a phrase at your lips, unless, indeed, my poverty insults you. The richest man in this land could do no more than love your daughter, and were she a queen, the homage of the poorest would not disgrace her."

"Permit me to ask you one question. What brings you to Ems?"

The young man hesitated, and the baron smiled ironically.

"I came, sir," he said at length, "in search of — I will confess it — in search of peace, of forgetfulness, of consolation."

His voice broke: he looked down, and remained silent.

The baron laughed aloud — a harsh mocking laugh that caused Albert to raise his head with a movement of sudden indignation.

"I have not deserved this treatment at your

unds, Baron Hohendorf," he said, turning towards e window.

"A gambler deserves only the contempt of honourble men," replied the baron.

"A gambler!" repeated Albert. "Good heavens, r! I have never touched a card in my life."

"What effrontery! You forget, then, that it is i my power to confront you with the proof of your ice; nay, at this instant to confound and convict ou. What gold is this?"

And the old gentleman, whose eyes had already etected the glimmer of the coin beneath the coat, fted the garment away upon the end of his walkg-stick. The lover turned pale, and could not eak.

"*Der teufel!* For a poor man you have, it ems, a well-filled travelling purse! Ah! *you* never ay!"

"Never, sir."

"Indeed! Pray, then, if your gold be not the uit of the gaming-table, whence comes it?"

"I know not. You will not believe me, I am ware; but I swear that I speak the truth. This old comes here, I know not how. This is the urth time I have found it upon my table. I know ot why it is here, who brings it, or how it is rought. By my honour as a gentleman and a oldier — by all my hopes of happiness in this life r the next, I am utterly ignorant of everything bout it!"

"This is too much!" cried the baron, furiously. 'Do you take me for an idiot or a dotard? Good

morning to you, sir, and I hope I may never see your face again!"

He slammed the door violently behind him, and went away down the stairs, leaving poor Von Steinberg utterly overwhelmed and broken-hearted.

"Cursed gold!" he exclaimed, dashing it upon the floor in his anger, "what brought thee here, and why dost thou torment me!"

Then the poor fellow thought of Emma, and of how his last chance was wrecked; and he was so miserable, that he threw himself upon his bed, and wept bitterly. All at once he remembered that the baron had a sister, at Langenschwalbach; she, perhaps, would believe him, would intercede for him! He started up, resolved to go thither at once; hastily gathered together the scattered pieces of money; locked them up in the drawer with the rest; ran down to a neighbouring carriage-stand; hired a vehicle to convey him to the railway-station, and in less than half an hour was on his way. In about three hours he arrived. He passed nearly the whole day in trying to discover the lady's address, and, when he had found it, was told that she had been for the last two months at Vienna. It was a foolish journey, with disappointment at the end of it! He came back quite late in the evening to Ems, and entered his own room, utterly broken down by anxiety and fatigue.

In the meantime the baron, crimson with rage, had returned to his hotel, and told all the circumstances to his daughter. She would not believe in the guilt of her lover.

"He a gambler!" she exclaimed. "It is impossible!"

"But I saw the gold upon his table!"

"He says he knows nothing of it, and he never told an untruth in his life. It will all be explained by-and-by."

"But I saw him playing at the tables!"

"It was some other who resembled him."

"Will you believe it, if you see him yourself?"

"I will, my father, and I will renounce him for ever. But not till then."

"Then you shall be convinced this evening."

The evening came, and the rooms were more than usually crowded. There was a ball in the *salon de danse;* supper in the ante-room; gaming, as usual, in the third apartment. The Baron von Hohendorf was there with his daughter and some friends. They made their way to the tables, but he whom they sought was not there. Eager faces enough were there around the board — faces of old women, cunning and avaricious; faces of pale dissipated boys, scarce old enough, one would have thought, to care for any games save those of the school-ground; faces of hardened, cool, determined gamblers; faces of girls, young and beautiful, and of men old and feeble. Strange table, around which youth, and beauty, age, deformity, and vice meet on equal ground!

Suddenly there was a movement at the farther end of the room; a whisper went round; the spectators made way, and the players drew aside for one

who now approached and took his place amongst them. This deference is shown only to those who play high and play frequently. Who is this noted gambler? Albert von Steinberg.

A cry of agony breaks from the pale lips of a young girl at the other end of the room. Alas! it is too surely he! He neither hears nor heeds anything around him. He does not even look towards her. He seats himself very quietly, as a matter of course; takes some *rouleaux* of gold and a packet of notes from his pocket; stakes a large sum; and begins to play with all the cool audacity of one whose faith in his own luck is unshakeable, and who is perfect master of the game. Besides this, he carried his self-command to that point which is only attained by years of practice. It was splendid to see him so impassive. His features were fixed and inexpressive as those of a statue; the steady earnestness of his gaze had something terrible in it; his very movements were scarcely those of a man liable to human frailties and human emotions; and the right hand with which he staked and swept up the gold, was stiff and passionless as that of the commandant in *Don Giovanni*.

The baron could contain his indignation no longer. Leaving his daughter with her friends, he made his way round the tables, and approached the young man's chair. He extended his hand to seize the player's arm, when his own was forcibly caught and held back. He turned, and saw a celebrated Prussian physician standing beside him.

"Stop, for heaven's sake!" he exclaimed. "Do

not speak to him. You know not the injury you might do him!"

"That is exactly my object. I'll spoil his game for him, the unprincipled hypocrite!"

"You will kill him."

"Absurd!"

"I am perfectly serious. Look at him. He sleeps! A sudden shock might be his death. You cannot see this, but I can. I have studied this thing narrowly, and I never beheld a more remarkable case of somnambulism."

The physician continued for some time conversing with the baron in an under tone. Presently the bank gave the signal; the players rose; the tables closed for that evening; and the Count von Steinberg, gathering up his enormous winnings, pushed back his chair and left the rooms, passing close before the baron without seeing him.

They followed him down the street to his own door. He entered by means of his latchkey, and closed it behind him without a sound. There was no light in his window — no one stirring in the house. None but those two had seen him enter.

The next morning, when he awoke, he found a larger pile of gold than ever on his table. He counted it with a shudder, and told over 44,000 florins.

Again there came a knock at his chamber-door. This time he did not even attempt to conceal the money; and when the baron and physician entered, he was too unhappy even to feel surprise at the sight of a stranger.

"You have again come to tell me that I am a gambler!" he exclaimed, despairingly, as he pointed to the gold, and leaned his head listlessly upon his hands.

"I say it, Count, because I saw it," replied the baron; "but at the same time I come to entreat your pardon for what passed at our last interview. You have gambled; but you are no gambler."

"Yes," interrupted the physician; "for somnambulists often perform the very actions which they would most abhor, if in a waking condition. But you are not a confirmed somnambulist. Yours is a mere functional derangement, and I can easily cure you. But, perhaps," he added, smiling, "you do not wish to lose so profitable a malady. You may become a *millionaire*."

"Nay, doctor!" cried the count, "I place myself in your hands. Cure me, I entreat you!"

"Well, well, there is time enough for that," said the baron. "First of all, let us shake hands, and be friends."

"I have so great a horror of play," replied the involuntary gambler, "that I shall instantly restore this money to the bank. See, here are, altogether, 130,000 florins!"

"Take my advice, Albert," said the baron, "and do no such thing. Suppose that in your sleep you had lost 130,000 florins, do you think the bank would have restored it to you? No, no; entertain no such scruples. Your father lost more than thrice that sum at those very tables, — it is but a restitution in part. Keep your florins, and return with me

to my hotel, where Emma is waiting to receive you. You have 130,000 there. I will excuse the other 70,000 upon which I formerly insisted, and you can make it up in love. Are you content; or must you restore the money to the bank?"

History has not recorded the lover's reply; at all events, he quitted Ems that same day in company with the Baron von Hohendorf and his pretty daughter. The prescriptions of the learned physician have, it is said, already effected a cure, and the *Frankfort Journal* announces the approaching marriage of Fräulein von Hohendorf with Albert, Count Steinberg.

CHAPTER X.

NUMBER THREE.

I AM a plain man, and you may not dislike to hear a plain statement of facts from me. Some of those facts lie beyond my understanding. I do not pretend to explain them. I only know that they happened as I relate them, and that I pledge myself for the truth of every word of them.

I began life roughly enough, down among the Worcestershire Potteries. I was an orphan; and my earliest recollections are of a great porcelain manufactory, where I helped about the yard, picked up what halfpence fell in my way, and slept in a harness-loft over the stable. Those were hard times; but things bettered themselves as I grew older and stronger, especially after George Barnard had come to be foreman of the yard.

George Barnard was a Wesleyan — we were mostly dissenters in the Potteries — sober, clear-headed, somewhat sulky and silent, but a good fellow every inch of him, and my best friend at the time when I most needed one. He took me out of the yard, and set me to the furnace-work. He entered me on the books at a fixed rate of wages. He helped me to pay for a little cheap schooling four nights a week; and he led me to go with him on Sundays to the chapel down by the river-side, where I first saw

Leah Payne. She was his sweetheart, and so pretty that I used to forget the preacher and everybody else when I looked at her. When she joined in the singing, I heard no voice but hers. If she asked me for the hymn-book, I used to blush and tremble. I believe I worshipped her, in my stupid ignorant way; and I think I worshipped Barnard almost as blindly, though after a different fashion. I felt I owed him everything. I knew that he had saved me, body and mind; and I looked up to him as a savage might look up to a missionary.

Leah was the daughter of a plumber, who lived close by the chapel. She was twenty, and George about seven or eight-and-thirty. Some captious folks said there was too much difference in their ages; but she was so serious-minded, and they loved each other so earnestly and quietly, that, if nothing had come between them during their courtship, I don't believe the question of disparity would ever have troubled the happiness of their married lives. Something did come, however; and that something was a Frenchman, called Louis Laroche. He was a painter on porcelain, from the famous works at Sèvres; and our master, it was said, had engaged him for three years certain, at such wages as none of our own people, however skilful, could hope to command. It was about the beginning or middle of September when he first came among us. He looked very young, was small, dark, and well-made; had little white soft hands, and a silky moustache; and spoke English nearly as well as I do. None of us liked him; but that was only natural, seeing how he was put over

the head of every Englishman in the place. Besides, though he was always smiling and civil, we couldn't help seeing that he thought himself ever so much better than the rest of us; and that was not pleasant. Neither was it pleasant to see him strolling about the town, dressed just like a gentleman, when working hours were over; smoking good cigars, when we were forced to be content with a pipe of common tobacco; hiring a horse on Sunday afternoons, when we were trudging afoot; and taking his pleasure as if the world was made for him to enjoy, and us to work in.

"Ben, boy," said George, "there's something wrong about that Frenchman."

It was on a Saturday afternoon, and we were sitting on a pile of empty seggars against the door of my furnace-room, waiting till the men should all have cleared out of the yard. Seggars are deep earthen boxes in which the pottery is put, while being fired in the kiln.

I looked up inquiringly.

"About the Count?" said I; for that was the nickname by which he went in the pottery.

George nodded, and paused for a moment with his chin resting on his palms.

"He has an evil eye," said he, "and a false smile. Something wrong about him."

I drew nearer, and listened to George as if he had been an oracle.

"Besides," added he, in his slow quiet way, with his eyes fixed straight before him as if he was thinking aloud, "there's a young look about him that isn't

natural. Take him just at sight, and you'd think he was almost a boy; but look close at him — see the little fine wrinkles under his eyes, and the hard lines about his mouth, and then tell me his age, if you can! Why, Ben, boy he's as old as I am, pretty near; ay, and as strong, too. You stare; but I tell you that, slight as he looks, he could fling you over his shoulder as if you were a feather. And as for his hands, little and white as they are, there are muscles of iron inside them, take my word for it."

"But, George, how can you know?"

"Because I have a warning against him," replied George, very gravely. "Because, whenever he is by, I feel as if my eyes saw clearer, and my ears heard keener, than at other times. Maybe it's presumption, but I sometimes feel as if I had a call to guard myself and others against him. Look at the children, Ben, how they shrink away from him; and see there, now! Ask Captain what he thinks of him! Ben, that dog likes him no better than I do."

I looked, and saw Captain crouching by his kennel with his ears laid back, growling audibly, as the Frenchman came slowly down the steps leading from his own workshop at the upper end of the yard. On the last step he paused; lighted a cigar; glanced round, as if to see whether any one was by; and then walked straight over to within a couple of yards of the kennel. Captain gave a short angry snarl, and laid his muzzle close down upon his paws, ready for a spring. The Frenchman folded his arms deliberately, fixed his eyes on the dog, and stood calmly smoking. He knew exactly how far he dared

go, and kept just that one foot out of harm's way. All at once he stooped, puffed a mouthful of smoke in the dog's eyes, burst into a mocking laugh, turned lightly on his heel, and walked away, leaving Captain straining at his chain, and barking after him like a mad creature.

Days went by, and I, at work in my own department, saw no more of the Count. Sunday came — the third, I think, after I had talked with George in the yard. Going with George to chapel, as usual, in the morning, I noticed that there was something strange and anxious in his face, and that he scarcely opened his lips to me on the way. Still I said nothing. It was not my place to question him; and I remember thinking to myself that the cloud would all clear off as soon as he found himself by Leah's side, holding the same book, and joining in the same hymn. It did not, however, for no Leah was there. I looked every moment to the door, expecting to see her sweet face coming in; but George never lifted his eyes from his book, or seemed to notice that her place was empty. Thus the whole service went by, and my thoughts wandered continually from the words of the preacher. As soon as the last blessing was spoken, and we were fairly across the threshold, I turned to George, and asked if Leah was ill?

"No," said he, gloomily. "She's not ill."

"Then why wasn't she ....?"

"I'll tell you why," he interrupted impatiently. "Because you've seen her here for the last time. She's never coming to chapel again."

"Never coming to chapel again?" I faltered, ıying my hand on his sleeve in the earnestness of ıy surprise. "Why, George, what is the matter?"

But he shook my hand off, and stamped with is iron heel till the pavement rang again.

"Don't ask me," said he, roughly. "Let me lone. You'll know soon enough."

And with this he turned off down a by-lane eading towards the hills, and left me without an- ıther word.

I had had plenty of hard treatment in my time; ɔut never, until that moment, an angry look or syllable from George. I did not know how to bear it. That day my dinner seemed as if it would choke me; and in the afternoon I went out and wandered restlessly about the fields till the hour for evening prayers came round. I then returned to the chapel, and sat down on a tomb outside, waiting for George. I saw the congregation go in by twos and threes; heard the first psalm-tune echo solemnly through the evening stillness; but no George came. Then the service began, and I knew that, punctual as his habits were, it was of no use to expect him any longer. Where could he be? What could have happened? Why should Leah Payne never come to chapel again? Had she gone over to some other sect, and was that why George seemed so unhappy?

Sitting there in the little dreary churchyard, with the darkness fast gathering around me, I asked myself these questions over and over again, till my brain ached; for I was not much used to thinking

about anything in those times. At last, I could bear to sit quiet no longer. The sudden thought struck me that I would go to Leah, and learn what the matter was, from her own lips. I sprang to my feet, and set off at once towards her home.

It was quite dark, and a light rain was beginning to fall. I found the garden-gate open, and a quick hope flashed across me that George might be there. I drew back for a moment, hesitating whether to knock or ring, when a sound of voices in the passage, and the sudden gleaming of a bright line of light under the door, warned me that some one was coming out. Taken by surprise, and quite unprepared for the moment with anything to say, I shrank back behind the porch, and waited until those within should have passed out. The door opened, and the light streamed suddenly upon the roses and the wet gravel.

"It rains," said Leah, bending forward and shading the candle with her hand.

"And is as cold as Siberia," added another voice, which was not George's, and yet sounded strangely familiar. "Ugh! what a climate for such a flower as my darling to bloom in!"

"Is it so much finer in France?" asked Leah, softly.

"As much finer as blue skies and sunshine can make it. Why, my angel, even your bright eyes will be ten times brighter, and your rosy cheeks ten times rosier, when they are transplanted to Paris. Ah! I can give you no idea of the wonders of Paris — the broad streets planted with trees, the palaces,

the shops, the gardens! — it is a city of enchantment."

"It must be, indeed!" said Leah. "And you will really take me to see all those beautiful shops?"

"Every Sunday, my darling — Bah! don't look so shocked. The shops in Paris are always open on Sunday, and everybody makes holiday. You will soon get over these prejudices."

"I fear it is very wrong to take so much pleasure in the things of this world," sighed Leah.

The Frenchman laughed, and answered her with a kiss.

"Good night, my sweet little saint!" said he, as he ran lightly down the path, and disappeared in the darkness. Leah sighed again, lingered a moment, and then closed the door.

Stupefied and bewildered, I stood for some seconds like a stone statue, unable to move, scarcely able to think. At length, I roused myself, as it were mechanically, and went towards the gate. At that instant a heavy hand was laid upon my shoulder, and a hoarse voice close beside my ear, said: —

"Who are you? What are you doing here?"

It was George. I knew him at once, in spite of the darkness, and stammered his name. He took his hand quickly from my shoulder.

"How long have you been here?" said he, fiercely. "What right have you to lurk about, like a spy in the dark? God help me, Ben — I'm half mad. I don't mean to be harsh to you."

"I'm sure you don't," I cried, earnestly.

"It's that cursed Frenchman," he went on, in a voice that sounded like the groan of one in pain. "He's a villain. I know he's a villain; and I've had a warning against him ever since the first moment he came among us. He'll make her miserable, and break her heart some day — my pretty Leah — and I loved her so! But I'll be revenged — as sure as there's a God in heaven, I'll be revenged!"

His vehemence terrified me. I tried to persuade him to go home; but he would not listen to me.

"No, no," he said. "Go home yourself, boy, and let me be. My blood is on fire: this rain is good for me, and I am better alone."

"If I could only do something to help you ...."

"You can't," interrupted he. "Nobody can help me. "I'm a ruined man, and I don't care what becomes of me. The Lord forgive me! my heart is full of wickedness, and my thoughts are the promptings of Satan. There go — for heaven's sake, go. I don't know what I say, or what I do."

I went, for I did not dare refuse any longer; but I lingered awhile at the corner of the street, and watched him pacing to and fro, to and fro, in the driving rain. At length I turned reluctantly away, and went home.

I lay awake that night for hours, thinking over the events of the day, and hating the Frenchman from my very soul. I could not hate Leah. I had worshipped her too long and too faithfully for that; but I looked upon her as a creature given over to destruction. I fell asleep towards morning, and

woke again shortly after daybreak. When I reached the pottery, I found George there before me, looking very pale, but quite himself, and setting the men to their work the same as usual. I said nothing about what had happened the day before. Something in his face silenced me; but seeing him so steady and composed, I took heart, and began to hope he had fought through the worst of his trouble. By-and-by the Frenchman came through the yard, gay and off-hand, with his cigar in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets. George turned sharply away into one of the workshops, and shut the door. I drew a deep breath of relief. My dread was to see them come to an open quarrel; and I felt that as long as they kept clear of that all would be well.

Thus the Monday went by, and the Tuesday; but still George kept aloof from me. I had sense enough not to be hurt by this. I felt he had a good right to be silent, if silence helped him to bear his trial better; and I made up my mind never to breathe another syllable on the subject, unless he began.

Wednesday came. I had overslept myself that morning, and came to work a quarter after the hour, expecting to be fined; for George was very strict as foreman of the yard, and treated friends and enemies just the same, instead of blaming me, however, he called me up, and said: —

"Ben, whose turn is it this week to sit up?"

"Mine, sir," I replied. (I always called him "Sir" in working hours.)

"Well, then, you may go home to-day, and the

same on Thursday and Friday; for there's a large batch of work for the ovens to-night, and there'll be the same to-morrow night and the night after."

"All right, sir," said I. "Then I'll be here by seven this evening."

"No, half-past nine will be soon enough. I've some accounts to make up, and I shall be here myself till then. Mind you are true to time, though."

"I'll be as true as the clock, sir," I replied, and was turning away when he called me back again.

"You're a good lad, Ben," said he. "Shake hands."

I seized his hand and pressed it warmly.

"If I'm good for anything, George," I answered with all my heart, "it's you who have made me so. God bless you for it!"

"Amen!" said he in a troubled voice, putting his hand to his hat.

And so we parted.

In general, I went to bed by day when I was attending to the firing by night; but this morning I had already slept longer than usual, and wanted exercise more than rest. So I ran home; put a bit of bread and meat in my pocket; snatched up my big thorn stick; and started off for a long day in the country. When I came home, it was quite dark and beginning to rain, just as it had begun to rain at about the same time that wretched Sunday evening; so I changed my wet boots, had an early supper and a nap in the chimney-corner, and went down to the works at a few minutes before half-past nine. Arriving at the factory gate, I found it ajar, and so

walked in and closed it after me. I remember thinking at the time that it was unlike George's usual caution to leave it so; but it passed from my mind next moment. Having slipped in the bolt, I went straight over to George's little counting-house, where the gas was shining cheerfully in the window. Here, also, somewhat to my surprise, I found the door open, and the room empty. I went in. The threshold and part of the floor were wetted by the driving rain. The wages-book was open on the desk, George's pen stood in the ink, and his hat hung on its usual peg in the corner. I concluded, of course, that he had gone round to the ovens; so, following him, I took down his hat and carried it with me, for it was now raining fast.

The baking-houses lay just opposite, on the other side of the yard. There were three of them, opening one out of the other; and in each, the great furnace filled all the middle of the room. These furnaces are, in fact, large kilns built of brick, with an oven closed in by an iron door in the centre of each, and a chimney going up through the roof. The pottery, enclosed in seggars, stands round inside on shelves, and has to be turned from time to time while the firing is going on. To turn these seggars, test the heat, and keep the fires up, was my work at the period of which I am now telling you.

Well! I went through the baking-houses one after the other, and found all empty alike. Then a strange, vague, uneasy feeling came over me, and I began to wonder what could have become of George. It was possible that he might be in one of the

workshops; so I ran over to the counting-house, lighted a lantern, and made a thorough survey of the yards. I tried the doors; they were all locked as usual. I peeped into the open sheds; they were all vacant. I called "George! George!" in every part of the outer premises; but the wind and rain drove back my voice, and no other voice replied to it. Forced at last to believe that he was really gone, I took his hat back to the counting-house, put away the wages-book, extinguished the gas, and prepared for my solitary watch.

The night was mild, and the heat in the baking-rooms intense. I knew, by experience, that the ovens had been overheated, and that none of the porcelain must go in for at least the next two hours; so I carried my stool to the door, settled myself in a sheltered corner where the air could reach me, but not the rain, and fell to wondering where George could have gone, and why he should not have waited till the time appointed. That he had left in haste was clear — not because his hat remained behind, for he might have had a cap with him — but because he had left the book open, and the gas lighted. Perhaps one of the workmen had met with some accident, and he had been summoned away so urgently that he had no time to think of anything; perhaps he would even now come back presently to see that all was right before he went home to his lodgings. Turning these things over in my mind, I grew drowsy, my thoughts wandered, and I fell asleep.

I cannot tell how long my nap lasted. I had

walked a great distance that day, and I slept heavily; but I awoke all in a moment, with a sort of terror upon me, and, looking up, saw George Barnard sitting on a stool before the oven door, with the firelight full upon his face.

Ashamed to be found sleeping, I started to my feet. At the same instant, he rose, turned away without even looking towards me, and went out into the next room.

"Don't be angry, George!" I cried, following him. "None of the seggars are in. I knew the fires were too strong, and —"

The words died on my lips. I had followed him from the first room to the second, from the second to the third, and in the third — I lost him!

I could not believe my eyes. I opened the end door leading into the yard, and looked out; but he was nowhere in sight. I went round to the back of the baking-houses, looked behind the furnaces, ran over to the counting-house, called him by his name over and over again; but all was dark, silent, lonely, as ever.

Then I remembered how I had bolted the outer gate, and how impossible it was that he should have come in without ringing. Then, too, I began again to doubt the evidence of my own senses, and to think I must have been dreaming.

I went back to my old post by the door of the first baking-house, and sat down for a moment to collect my thoughts.

"In the first place," said I to myself, "there is but one outer gate. That outer gate I bolted on the

inside, and it is bolted still. In the next place, I searched the premises, and found all the sheds empty, and the workshop-doors padlocked as usual on the outside. I proved that George was nowhere about, when I came, and I know he could not have come in since, without my knowledge. Therefore it is a dream. It is certainly a dream, and there's an end of it."

And with this I trimmed my lantern and proceeded to test the temperature of the furnaces. We used to do this, I should tell you, by the introduction of little roughly moulded lumps of common fire-clay. If the heat is too great, they crack; if too little, they remain damp and moist; if just right, they become firm and smooth all over, and pass into the biscuit stage. Well! I took my three little lumps of clay, put one in each oven, waited while I counted five hundred, and then went round again to see the results. The two first were in capital condition, the third had flown into a dozen pieces. This proved that the seggars might at once go into ovens One and Two, but that number Three had been over-heated, and must be allowed to go on cooling for an hour or two longer.

I therefore stocked One and Two with nine rows of seggars, three deep on each shelf; left the rest waiting till number Three was in a condition to be trusted; and, fearful of falling asleep again, now that the firing was in progress, walked up and down the rooms to keep myself awake. This was hot work, however, and I could not stand it very long; so I went back presently to my stool by the door, and

fell to thinking about my dream. The more I thought of it, the more strangely real it seemed, and the more I felt convinced that I was actually on my feet, when I saw George get up and walk into the adjoining room. I was also certain that I had still continued to see him as he passed out of the second room into the third, and that at that time I was even following his very footsteps. Was it possible, I asked myself, that I could have been up and moving, and yet not quite awake? I had heard of people walking in their sleep. Could it be that I was walking in mine, and never waked till I reached the cool air of the yard? All this seemed likely enough, so I dismissed the matter from my mind, and passed the rest of the night in attending to the seggars, adding fresh fuel from time to time to the furnaces of the first and second ovens, and now and then taking a turn through the yards. As for number Three, it kept up its heat to such a degree that it was almost day before I dared trust the seggars to go in it.

Thus the hours went by; and at half-past seven on Thursday morning, the men came to their work. It was now my turn to go off duty, but I wanted to see George before I left, and so waited for him in the counting-house, while a lad named Steve Storr took my place at the ovens. But the clock went on from half-past seven to a quarter to eight; then to eight o'clock; then to a quarter-past eight — and still George never made his appearance. At length, when the hand got round to half-past eight, I grew weary of waiting, took up my hat, ran home, went

to bed, and slept profoundly until past four in the afternoon.

That evening I went down to the factory quite early; for I had a restlessness upon me, and I wanted to see George before he left for the night. This time, I found the gate bolted, and I rang for admittance.

"How early you are, Ben!" said Steve Storr, as he let me in.

"Mr. Barnard's not gone?" I asked, quickly; for I saw at the first glance that the gas was out in the counting-house.

"He's not gone," said Steve, "because he's never been."

"Never been?"

"No: and what's stranger still, he's not been home either, since dinner yesterday."

"But he was here last night."

"Oh yes, he was here last night, making up the books. John Parker was with him till past six; and you found him here, didn't you, at half-past nine?"

I shook my head.

"Well, he's gone, anyhow. Good night!"

"Good night!"

I took the lantern from his hand, bolted him out mechanically, and made my way to the baking-houses, like one in a stupor. George gone? Gone without a word of warning to his employer, or of farewell to his fellow-workmen? I could not understand it. I could not believe it. I sat down bewildered, incredulous, stunned. Then came hot tears,

doubts, terrifying suspicions. I remembered the wild words he had spoken a few nights back; the strange calm by which they were followed; my dream of the evening before. I had heard of men who drowned themselves for love; and the turbid Severn ran close by — so close, that one might pitch a stone into it from some of the workshop windows.

These thoughts were too horrible. I dared not dwell upon them. I turned to work, to free myself from them, if I could; and began by examining the ovens. The temperature of all was much higher than on the previous night, the heat having been gradually increased during the last twelve hours. It was now my business to keep the heat on the increase for twelve more; after which it would be allowed, as gradually, to subside, until the pottery was cool enough for removal. To turn the seggars, and add fuel to the two first furnaces, was my first work. As before, I found number three in advance of the others, and so left it for half an hour, or an hour. I then went round the yard; tried the doors; let the dog loose; and brought him back with me to the baking-houses, for company. After that, I set my lantern on a shelf beside the door, took a book from my pocket, and began to read.

I remember the title of the book as well as possible. It was called "Bowlker's Art of Angling," and contained little rude cuts of all kinds of artificial flies, hooks, and other tackle. But I could not keep my mind to it for two minutes together; and at last I gave it up in despair, covered my face with my hands, and fell into a long, absorbing, painful

train of thought. A considerable time had gone by thus — maybe an hour — when I was roused by a low whimpering howl from Captain, who was lying at my feet. I looked up with a start, just as I had started from sleep the night before, and with the same vague terror; and saw, exactly in the same place and in the same attitude, with the firelight full upon him — George Barnard!

At this sight, a fear heavier than the fear of death fell upon me, and my tongue seemed paralysed in my mouth. Then, just as last night, he rose, or seemed to rise, and went slowly out into the next room. A power stronger than myself compelled me, reluctantly, to follow him. I saw him pass through the second room — cross the threshold of the third — walk straight up to the oven — and there pause. He then turned, for the first time, with the glare of the red firelight pouring out upon him from the open door of the furnace, and looked at me, face to face. In the same instant, his whole frame and countenance seemed to glow and become transparent, as if the fire were all within him and around him — and in that glow he became, as it were, absorbed into the furnace, and disappeared!

I uttered a wild cry, tried to stagger from the room, and fell insensible before I reached the door.

When I next opened my eyes, the grey dawn was in the sky; the furnace doors were all closed as I had left them when I last went round; the dog was quietly sleeping not far from my side; and the men were ringing at the gate, to be let in.

I told my tale from beginning to end, and was laughed at, as a matter of course, by all who heard it. When it was found, however, that my statements never varied, and, above all, that George Barnard continued absent, some few began to talk it over seriously, and among those few, the master of the works. He forbade the furnace to be cleared out, called in the aid of a celebrated naturalist, and had the ashes submitted to a scientific examination. The result was as follows:

The ashes were found to have been largely saturated with some kind of fatty animal matter. A considerable portion of those ashes consisted of charred bone. A semi-circular piece of iron, which had evidently once been the heel of a workman's heavy boot, was found, half fused, at one corner of the furnace. Near it, a tibia bone, which still retained sufficient of its original form and texture to render identification possible. This bone, however, was so much charred, that it fell into powder on being handled.

After this, not many doubted that George Barnard had been foully murdered, and that his body had been thrust into the furnace. Suspicion fell upon Louis Laroche. He was arrested, a coroner's inquest was held, and every circumstance connected with the night of the murder was as thoroughly sifted and investigated as possible. All the sifting in the world, however, failed either to clear or to condemn Louis Laroche. On the very night of his release, he left the place by the mail train, and was never seen or

heard of there, again. As for Leah, I know not what became of her. I went away myself before many weeks were over, and never have set foot among the Potteries from that hour to this.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PATAGONIAN BROTHERS.

We are not related. His name is John Griffhs, and I am William Waldur; and we called ourlves the Patagonian Brothers, because it looked ell in the bills and pleased the public. We met r chance, about six years since, on the race-course Doncaster, and so took a sort of mutual liking, id went partners in a tour through the midland unties. We had never seen or heard of each other) to that time; and though we became good friends, ere never greatly intimate. I knew nothing of his st life, nor he of mine; and I never asked him a estion on the subject. I am particular to have is all clear from the beginning; for I am a plain an telling a plain story, and I want no one misunderstand a word of what I am about to late.

We made a little money by our tour. It was t much; but it was more than either of us had en able to earn before; so we agreed to stay tother, and try our fortune in London. This time got an engagement at Astley's for the winter, d, when the summer came, joined a travelling cus, and roamed about as before.

The circus was a capital thing — a republic, so say, in which all were equals. We had a manager

to whom we paid a fixed salary, and the rest went shares in the profits. There were times when we did not even clear our expenses; there were towns where we made ten and fifteen pounds a-night; but the bad luck went along with the good, and, on the whole, we prospered.

We stayed with the company two years and a half in all, and played at every town between York and London. During that time we had found leisure to improve. We knew each other's weight and strength now to a hair, and grew bolder with experience; so that there was scarcely a new feat brought out anywhere which we did not learn, even to the "perche" business, and the trick of walking, head downwards, on a marble ceiling. The fact is, that we were admirably matched, which, in our profession, is the most important point of all. Our height was the same, to the sixteenth of an inch, and we were not unlike in figure. If Griffiths possessed a little more muscular strength, I was the more active, and even that difference was in our favour. I believe that, in other respects, we suited each other equally well, and I know that, for the three years and a half which we had spent together (counting from our first meeting at Doncaster down to the time when we dissolved partnership with the circus folks) we had never had an angry word. Griffiths was a steady, saving, silent fellow enough, with little gray eyes, and heavy black brows. I remember thinking, once or twice, that he was not quite the sort of person I would like for an enemy; but that was in reference to no act of his, and only

a fancy of my own. For myself, I can live with any one who is disposed to live with me, and love peace and good-will better than anything in the world.

We had now grown so expert, that we resolved to better ourselves and return to London, which we did somewhere about the end of February, or the beginning of March, eighteen hundred and fifty-five. We put up at a little inn in the Borough; and, before a week was over, found ourselves engaged by Mr. James Rice of the "Belvidere Tavern," at a salary of seven pounds a-week. Now, this was a great advance upon all our previous gains; and the Tavern was by no means a bad place for the founding of a theatrical reputation.

Situated half-way between the West-end and the City, surrounded by a densely populated neighbourhood, and lying in the very path of the omnibuses, this establishment was one of the most prosperous of its class. There was a theatre, and a concert-room, and a garden, where dancing, and smoking, and rifle-shooting, and supper-eating was going on from eight till twelve o'clock every night all through the summer, which made the place a special favourite with the working-classes.

Here, then, we were engaged (Griffiths and I), with a promise that our salary should be raised if we proved attractive; and raised it soon was, for we drew enormously. We brought out the perche and the ceiling business; came down in the midst of fireworks, from a platform higher than the roof of the theatre; and, in short, did everything that ever yet was done in our line — ay, and did it well, too,

though perhaps it is not my place to say so. At all events, the great coloured posters were pasted up all over the town; and our salary was increased to fifteen pounds a-week; and the gentleman who writes about the plays in the Sunday Snub, was pleased to observe that there was no performance in London half so wonderful as that of the Patagonian Brothers; for which I take this opportunity to thank him kindly.

We lodged (of course together) in a quiet street on a hill near Islington. The house was kept by Mrs. Morrison, a respectable, industrious woman, whose husband had been a gasfitter at one of the theatres, and who was now left a widow with one only daughter just nineteen years of age. She was very good, and very pretty. She was christened Alice, but her mother called her Ally, and we soon fell into the same habit; for they were very simple, friendly people, and we were soon as good friends as if we had all been living together in the same house for years.

I am not a good hand at telling a story, as, I daresay, you have found out by this time — and, indeed, I never did sit down to write one out before — so I may as well come to the point at once, and confess that I loved her. I also fancied, before many weeks were over, that she did not altogether dislike me; for a man's wits are twice as sharp when he is in love, and there is not a blush, or a glance, or a word, that he does not contrive to build some hope upon. So one day, when Griffiths was out, I went

downstairs to the parlour, where she was sitting by the window, sewing, and took a chair beside her.

"Ally, my dear," said I, stopping her right hand from working, and taking it up in both of mine; "Ally, my dear, I want to speak to you."

She blushed, and turned pale, and blushed again, and I felt the pulses in her little soft hand throbbing like the heart of a frightened bird, but she never answered a syllable.

"Ally, my dear," said I, "I am a plain man. I am thirty-two years of age. I don't know how to flatter like some folks, and I have had but very little book-learning to speak of. But, my dear, I love you; and though I don't pretend that you are the first girl I ever fancied, I can truly say that you are the first I ever cared to make my wife. So, if you'll take me, such as I am, I'll be a true husband to you as long as I live."

What answer she made, or whether she spoke at all, is more than I can undertake to tell, for my ideas were all confused; but I only remember that I kissed her, and felt very happy, and that, when Mrs. Morrison came into the room, she found me with my arm clasped round my darling's waist.

I scarcely know when it was that I first noticed the change in John Griffiths; but that it was somewhere about this time, I am tolerably certain. It is hard to put looks into words, and to make account of trifles that, after all, are matters of feeling more than matters of fact; but others saw the change as well as myself, and no one could help observing that he grew to be more silent and unsociable than

ever. He kept away from home as much as possible. He spent all his Sundays out, starting away the first thing after breakfast, and not coming back again till close upon midnight. He even put an end to our old friendly custom of walking home together after our night's work was over, and joined a sort of tap-room club that was kept by a dozen or so of idle fellows belonging to the theatre. Worse than this, he scarcely exchanged a word with me from morning till night, even when we were at meals. He watched me about the room as if I had been a thief. And sometimes, though I am sure I never wronged him willingly in my life, I caught him looking at me from under those black brows of his, as if he hated me.

More than once I laid my hand upon his sleeve as he was hurrying away on Sundays, or turning off towards the club room at night, and said, "Griffiths, have you got anything against me?" — or, "Griffiths, won't you come home to a friendly glass with me to-night?" But he either shook me off without a word, or muttered some sulky denial that sounded more like a curse than a civil answer; so I got tired of peace-making at last, and let him go his own way, and choose his own company.

The summer was already far advanced, and our engagement at the Belvidere had well-nigh ended, when I began to buy the furniture, and Ally to prepare her wedding things. Matters continued the same with John Griffiths; but, when the day was fixed, I made up my mind to try him once again, and invite him to the church and the dinner. The

circumstances of that invitation are as clear in my memory as if the whole affair had taken place this morning.

It was on the twenty-ninth of July (I am particular about dates), and there had been a general call to rehearsal at one o'clock that day. The weather was warm and hazy, and I started early that I might not go in late or tired; for I knew that, what with the rehearsal, and the new piece, and the Terrific Descent, I should have enough to do before my day's work was over. The consequence was, that I arrived about twenty minutes too soon. The gardens had a dreary look by daylight; but they were pleasanter, anyhow, than the theatre; so I loitered up and down among the smoky trees, and watched the waiters polishing the stains off the tables in the summer-houses, and thought how shabby the fountains looked when they were not playing, and what miserable gim-crack concerns were the Stalactite Caves and the Cosmoramic Grottoes, and all the other attractions which looked so fine by the light of coloured lamps and fireworks.

Well, just as I was sauntering on, turning these things over in my mind, whom should I see in one of the summer-houses but John Griffiths. He was lying forward upon the table, with his face resting upon his clasped hands, sound asleep. An empty ale-bottle and glass stood close beside him, and his stick had fallen near his chair. I could not be mistaken in him, though his face was hidden; so I went up and touched him smartly on the shoulder.

"A fine morning, John?" says I. "I thought I

was here early; but it seems that you were before me, after all."

He sprang to his feet at the sound of my voice, as if he had been struck, and then turned impatiently away.

"What did you wake me for?" he said, sullenly.

"Because I have news to tell you. You know that the sixth of August will be our last night here. . . . . Well, mate, on the seventh, please God, I'm going to be married, and . . . ."

"Curse you!" he interrupted, turning a livid face upon me, and an eye that glared like a tiger's. "Curse you! How dare you come to me with that tale, you smooth-faced hound? — to me, of all men living?"

I was so little prepared for this burst of passion, that I had nothing to say; and so he went on:

"Why can't you let me alone? What do you tempt me for? I've kept my hands off of you till now . . . ."

He paused and bit his lip, and I saw that he was trembling from head to foot. I am no coward — it's not likely that I should be a Patagonian Brother if I was. But the sight of his hatred seemed to turn me, for the moment, quite sick and giddy.

"My God!" said I, leaning up against the table, "what do you mean? Are you mad?"

He made no answer; but looked straight at me, and then walked away. I don't know how it was; but from that moment I knew all. It was written, somehow, in his face.

"Oh! Ally, dear!" I said to myself with a kind of groan, and sat down on the nearest bench; I believe that, at that moment, I scarcely knew where I was, or what I was doing.

I did not see him again till we met on the stage, about an hour afterwards, to go through our scene in the rehearsal. It was a grand piece, with a great deal of firing, and real water, and a live camel in the last act; and Griffiths and I were Mozambique slaves, performing before the Rajah in the Hall of Candelabras. Excepting that it cost a great deal of money, that is all I ever knew about the plot; and, upon my word, I don't believe that anybody else knew much more. By this time I had, of course, recovered my usual composure; but I could see that Griffiths had been drinking, for his face was flushed and his balance unsteady. When the rehearsal was over, Mr. Rice called us into his private room and brought out a decanter of sherry, with which, I must say, he was always as liberal as any gentleman could be.

"Patagonians," says he, for he had a wonderfully merry way with him, and always called us by that name, "I suppose you would make no objection to a little matter of extra work and extra pay on the sixth — just to end the season with something stunning — hey?"

"No, no, sir, not we," replied Griffiths, in a sort of hearty manner that wasn't natural to him. "We're ready for anything. Is it the flying business you spoke about the other day?"

"Better than that," said the manager, filling up

the glasses. "It's a new French feat that has never yet been done in this country, and they call it the trapeze. Patagonians, your health!"

So we drank his in return, and Mr. Rice explained all about it. It was to be an exhibition of posturing and a balloon ascent both in one. At some distance below the car was to be secured a triangular wooden framework, which framework was called the trapeze. From the lower pole, or base of this triangle, one of us was to be suspended, with a ligature of strong leather attached to his ankle, in case of accidents. Just as the balloon was rising and this man ascending head-downwards, the other was to catch him by the hands and go up also, having, if he preferred it, some band or other to bind him to his companion. In this position we were then to go through our customary performances, continuing them so long as the balloon remained in sight.

"All this," said Mr. Rice, "sounds much more dangerous than it really is. The motion of a balloon through the air is so steady and imperceptible, that, but for the knowledge of being up above the house-tops, you will perform almost as comfortably as in the gardens. Besides, I am speaking to brave men who know their business, and are not to be dashed by a trifle — hey, Patagonians?"

Griffiths brought his hand down heavily upon the table, and made the glasses ring again.

"I'm ready, sir," said he, with an oath. "I'm ready to do it alone, if any man here is afraid to go with me!"

He looked at me as he said this, with a sort of mocking laugh that brought the blood up into my face.

"If you mean that for me, John," said I, quickly, "I'm no more afraid than yourself; and, if that's all about it, I'll go up to-night!"

If I was to try from now till this day next year, I never could describe the expression that came over his face as I spoke those words. It seemed to turn all the currents of my blood. I could not understand it then — but I understood it well enough afterwards.

Well, Mr. Rice was mightily pleased to find us so willing, and a very few more words ended the matter. Mr. Staines and his famous Wurtemberg balloon were to be engaged; fifteen hundred additional coloured lamps were to be hired, and Griffiths and I were to receive twelve pounds a-piece for the evening, over and above our general salary.

Poor Ally! In the midst of the excitement I had forgotten her, and it was not till I was out of the theatre and walking slowly homewards that I remembered she must be told. For my own part, I did not believe there was the slightest danger; but I knew how her fears would magnify everything, and the nearer I came towards Islington the more uncomfortable I felt. After all, I was such a coward — for I always am a coward where women are concerned — that I could not tell her that day, nor even the next; and it was only on Sunday, when we were sitting together after dinner, that I found courage to speak of it. I had expected something

of a scene; but I had no idea that she would have taken on as she did, and I declare that, even then, if the posters had not been already out and myself bound in honour to act up to my engagement, I would have gone straight to Mr. Rice and declined the business altogether. Poor little, soft-hearted darling! it was a sore trial to her and to me also, and I was an inconsiderate idiot not to have thought of her feelings in the first instance. But there was no help for it now; so I gave her the only consolation in my power, by solemnly promising that I would be the first man tied to the trapeze. It was, of course, the safest position, and when I had assured her of this, she grew calmer. On all other points I kept my own counsel, as you may be certain; and as to John Griffiths, I saw less of him than ever. He even took his meals in the city now, and, during the seven days that elapsed between the twenty-ninth and the sixth, never once came face to face with me, except upon the stage.

I had a hard matter to get away from home when the afternoon of the sixth came round. My darling clung about me as if her heart would break, and although I did my best to cheer her, I don't mind confessing now that I went out and cried a tear or two in the passage.

"Keep up your spirits, Ally dear," says I, smiling and kissing her the last thing before I left the house. "And don't be spoiling your pretty eyes in that way. Remember that I want you to look well, and that we are to be married to-morrow."

The multitude in the Belvidere Gardens was something wonderful. There they were, men, women, and children, thronging the balconies, the orchestra-stairs, and every available inch of ground; and there, in the midst of them, rolled and swayed the huge Wurtemberg balloon, like a sleepy, lolling giant. The ascent was fixed for six o'clock, that we might come down again by daylight; so I made haste to dress, and then went to the green-room to see after Mr. Rice, and hear something of what was going forward.

Mr. Rice was there, and three gentlemen with him, namely, Colonel Steward, Captain Crawford, and Sydney Baird, Esquire. They were fine handsome looking gentlemen, all three — especially Sydney Baird, Esquire, who was, as I have since been told, a play-writer, and one of the cleverest men of the day. I was going to draw back when I saw them sitting there with their wine and cigars; but they would have me in to take a glass of port, and shook hands with me all round as polite as possible, and treated me as handsome as any gentlemen could.

"Here's health and success to you, my brave fellow," says Colonel Steward, "and a pleasant trip to us all!" and then I found that they were going up in the car with Mr. Staines.

And now, what with their light cheerful ways and pleasant talking, and what with the glass of wine that I had taken, and the excitement, and the hum of voices from the crowd outside, I was in first-rate spirits, and as impatient to be off as a

racer at the starting-point. Presently one of the gentlemen looked at his watch.

"What are we waiting for?" said he. "It is ten minutes past six already."

And so it was. Ten minutes past the hour, and Griffiths had not yet been seen or heard of. Well, Mr. Rice grew very uneasy, and the crowd very noisy, and so twenty minutes more went by. Then we made up our minds to go without him, and Mr. Rice made a little speech and explained it to the people; and then there was a cheer, and a great bustle; and the gentlemen took their seats in the car; and a hamper full of champagne and cold chicken was put in with them; and I was made fast by one leg to the base of the trapeze; and Mr. Staines was just about to get in himself, and give the signal to cut loose, when who should we see forcing his way through the crowd but Griffiths.

Of course there was another cheer at this, and a delay of eight or ten minutes more while he was dressing. At last he came, and it was now just a quarter to seven o'clock. He looked very sullen when he found that he was to be the undermost; but there was no time to change anything now, even if I had been willing; so his left wrist and my right were bound together by a leathern strap, the signal was given, the band struck up, the crowd applauded like mad, and the balloon rose straight and steady above the heads of the people.

Down sank the trees and the fountains, and the pavement of upturned faces. Down sank the roof of the theatre, and fainter grew the sound of

the hurrahing and the music. The sensation was so strange, that for the first moment I was forced to close my eyes, and felt as if I must fall, and be dashed to pieces. But that soon passed away, and by the time we had risen to about three hundred feet I was as comfortable as if I had been born and bred in the air with my head downwards.

Presently we began our performances. Griffiths was as cool as possible — I never saw him cooler — and we went through every conceivable attitude; now swinging by our hands, now by our feet, now throwing summersaults one over the other. And during the whole of this time the streets and squares seemed to sink away to the right, and the noises from the living world died on the air — and, as I turned and slung, changing my position with every minute, I caught strange flitting glimpses of the sunset and the city, the sky and the river, the gentlemen leaning over the car and the tiny passengers swarming down below like ants on an ant-hill.

Then the gentlemen grew tired of leaning over, and began to talk and laugh, and busy themselves over their hamper. Then the Surrey hills drew nearer, and the city sank away to the right, farther and farther. Then there were nothing but green fields with lines of railways crossing them here and there; and presently it grew quite damp and misty, and we ceased to see anything, except through breaks and openings in the clouds.

"Come, John," says I, "our share of this busi-

ness is done. Don't you think we might as well be getting into the car?"

He was hanging below just then, holding on by my two hands, and had been hanging so quite quiet for some minutes. He didn't seem to hear me; and no wonder, for the clouds were gathering about us so thickly, that even the voices of the gentlemen up above grew muffled, and I could hardly see for a yard before me in any direction. So I called to him again, and repeated the question.

He made no answer, but shifted his grasp from my hand to my wrist, and then up to the middle of my arm, so raising himself by degrees, till our faces came nearly on a level. There he paused, and I felt his hot breath on my cheek.

"William Waldur," said he hoarsely, "wasn't to-morrow to have been your wedding-day?"

Something in the tone of his voice, in the question, in the dusk and dreadful solitude, struck me with horror. I tried to shake off his hands, but he held too fast for that.

"Well, what if it was?" said I after a moment. "You needn't grip so hard. Catch hold of the pole, will you? and let go of my arms."

He gave a short hard laugh, but never stirred.

"I suppose we're about two thousand feet high," says he, and it seemed to me that he had something between his teeth. "If either of us was to fall, he'd be a dead man before he touched the ground."

I would have given the world at that moment to be able to see his face; but what with my own

head being downwards, and all his weight hanging to my arms, I had no more power than an infant.

"John!" I exclaimed, "what do you mean? Catch hold of the pole, and let me do the same. My head's on fire!"

"Do you see this?" said he, catching my arms a couple of inches higher up, and looking right into my face. "Do you see this?"

It was a large, open clasp-knife, and he was holding it with his teeth. His breath seemed to hiss over the cold blade.

"I bought it this evening — I hid it in my belt — I waited till the clouds came round and there was no soul to see. Presently I shall cut you away from the balloon. I took an oath that you should never have her, and I mean to keep it."

A dimness came over my eyes, and everything grew red. I felt that in another minute I should be insensible. He thought I was so already, and, letting my arms free, made a spring at the pole overhead.

That spring saved me. Our wrists were bound together, and as he rose he drew me along with him; for I was so faint and giddy that I could make no effort for myself.

I saw him hold by the pole with his left hand; I saw him take the knife in his right; I felt the cold steel pass between his wrist and mine, and then . . . .

And then, the horror of the moment gave me back my strength, and I clung to the framework just as the thong gave way.

We were separated now, and I was still secured to the trapeze by one ankle. He had only his arms to trust to — and the knife.

Oh, the deadly, deadly strife that followed! it sickens me to think of it. His only hope now lay in the cursed weapon; and so clinging to the woodwork with one hand, he strove to stab me with the other.

It was life or death now, and I grew desperate. To feel his murderous clutch upon my throat, and, in the silence of the hideous struggle, to hear the report of a champagne cork, followed by a peal of careless laughter, overhead .... Oh, it was worse than death, a hundred times over!

I cannot tell how long we clung thus, each with a hand upon the other's throat. It may have been only a few seconds; but it seemed like hours to me. The question was simply which should be strangled first.

Presently his gripe relaxed, his lips became dead-white, and a shudder ran through every fibre of his body. He had turned giddy!

Then a cry burst from him — a cry like nothing human. He made a false clutch at the trapeze, and reeled over. I caught him, just in time, by the belt round his waist.

"It's all over with me," he groaned between his set teeth. "It's all — over — with me! Take your revenge!"

Then his head fell heavily back, and he hung, a dead weight, on my arm.

I did take my revenge; but it was hard work,

and I was already half exhausted. How I contrived to hold him up, to unbind my foot, and to crawl, so laden, up the ropes, is more than I can tell; but my presence of mind never failed me for an instant, and I suppose the excitement gave me a sort of false strength while it lasted. At all events, I did it, though I now only remember climbing over the basket-work, and seeing the faces of the gentlemen all turned upon me as I sank to the bottom of the car, scarcely more alive than the burthen in my arms.

He is a penitent man now, an Australian settler, and, as I am told, well to do in those parts.

This is my story, and I have no more to tell.

CHAPTER XII.

MY DIAMOND STUDS.

"Diamonds of a most praised water." — PERICLES.

"SIR," said the stranger, "those studs are mine."

We were alone together, face to face. The train was flying on at the rate of thirty miles an hour. It was already verging towards evening, and we were about halfway between Liege and Brussels.

I shrank back into the farthest corner of my little compartment, and stared at him. His hair was dark, and hung in long loose locks; his eyes were wild and brilliant; and he wore an ample cloak with a high fur-collar. I thought the man must be mad, and I turned cold all over.

"Did you speak, sir?" I found courage to say.

"I spoke, sir. You wear a set of studs — diamonds set in coloured gold — very graceful design — stones of an excellent water; but — they are not yours."

"Not mine, sir?"

The stranger nodded.

I had purchased them only a week before. They captivated me from the window of a jeweller's shop in Berlin; and they cost me — no, I dare not say what they cost me, for fear my wife should chance to see this statement.

I took out my pocket-book, and handed the bill to the stranger.

"Sir," I said, "be pleased to read this little paper, and convince yourself that the studs are mine, and mine only."

He just glanced it over, and returned it to me.

"I see," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "that they appear to be yours by right of purchase; but nevertheless they belong to me by right of inheritance. I can make this clear to you very easily, if you choose to hear my story; and no doubt we shall presently contrive some plan by which to settle the question of ownership."

My heart sank within me at the cool certainty of his voice and countenance.

"Shall I go on?" he asked, lighting a cigar.

"Oh, by all means," I replied. "I shall be delighted."

He smiled ominously to himself; then sighed and shook his head; passed his fingers twice or thrice through his long locks; crossed his feet deliberately on the opposite cushions; and fixing his eyes full upon me, thus began:

"Though a native of Russia, and born in St. Petersburgh, I am of Hindoo descent. My grandfather belonged to the province of Hyderabad; but, travelling thence while yet a young man, established himself at Balaghaut, and became a worker in the great diamond-mines commonly known as the mines of Golconda. A grave, silent, unsociable man was my grandfather, and little beloved by his fellow-miners. The superintendent, however, placed great confidence in him; and by-and-by, being promoted to the situation of overseer, he married. The only

offspring of this union was Adjai Ghosal, my father. The Hindoos, as you must be aware, place a high value upon learning; and even the poorest evince such a respect for education as would do honour to the working-classes of a more enlightened community. Of this feeling no man in his position partook more largely than my grandfather. Uninstructed himself, he was ardently desirous that his son should benefit by advantages which, generally speaking, were accessible only to the wealthy; and in pursuance of this ambition, sent Adjai Ghosal, at the age of eleven years, to a large native academy at Benares. People wondered at first, and asked each other what the thing meant, and where the overseer found means to do it. 'Have you found a lac of rupees lately?' inquired one. 'Do you intend to make a diamond-merchant of the little Adjai?' asked another. But my grandfather only held his peace; and after a time the marvel died away, and was forgotten. And thus eleven more years passed on; and my father, at the age of twenty-two was summoned home to Balaghaut to receive the last benediction of his expiring parent. He found the old man stretched upon a mat, and almost speechless.

"'Adjai,' he murmured, — 'Adjai, my son, thou art arrived in time — in good time; for I could not have borne to die without seeing thee.'

"My father pressed his hand in silence, and turned his face aside.

"'Adjai,' said my grandfather, 'I have a terrible secret to confide to thee; one which my soul refuses to carry to the grave. Canst thou endure to hear it?

"My father urged him to speak.

"'It is to my own shame to reveal it to thee, Adjai; but I bow my head to the punishment. My son, I have sinned.'

"My father became more curious than ever.

"'Thou wilt not despise my memory, Adjai?'

"'By Brahma, no!' said my father, raising his hand to his head.

"'Then hearken.'

"The old miner lifted himself upon his elbow, and collected all his strength. My father knelt down and listened.

"'It happened,' said my grandfather, 'just three-and-twenty years ago, and I was then but a working-miner. I chanced one day upon a vein of extraordinary richness. My son, I was tempted. The evil one took possession of my soul — I secreted five diamonds. One was incalculably valuable — larger than a walnut, and, as far as I could judge, of admirable water. The other four were about the size of peas. Alas, Adjai! from that hour I was a miserable man. Many and many a time, I was on the point of confessing the theft; and was as frequently deterred by shame, fear, avarice, or ambition. I married; and a year after my marriage thou wert born. Then I resolved to dedicate this wealth to thee, and thee alone; to educate thee; to enrich thee; to make thee prosperous and learned; and never, never to profit in my own person by my sin."

"'Generous parent!' exclaimed my father, enthusiastically.

"'When I took thee to Benares, Adjai,' con-

tinued my grandfather, 'I sold one of the four smaller diamonds; and with this I have defrayed the expenses of thy education. I never spent one fraction of the sum upon myself; and some few golden mohurs of it are yet remaining.'

"'Indeed!' said my father, who was listening with the greatest attention. 'And the rest of the gems?'

"'The rest of the gems, Adjai, thou canst restore when I am gone.'

"'Restore!' echoed my father.

"'Yes, my child. Thou hast education. It will make thee far happier than the possession of ill-gotten riches; and I shall die in peace, knowing that reparation will be made. As for the few remaining mohurs, I think, if thou art not over-scrupulous in the matter, thou mightest almost be justified in keeping them. They will help thee to begin the world.'

"'Indeed!' said my father, with a curious sort of smile flitting about the corners of his mouth.

"At this moment the old man changed colour, and a shudder passed over him.

"'I — I have told thee just in time, Adjai,' he said falteringly. 'I feel that — that I have not many moments to live. Come hither, that I may give thee my blessing.'

"'My dear father,' said Adjai Ghosal, 'you have forgotten to tell me where the diamonds are hidden.'

"'True,' gasped the dying man. 'Thou wilt find them, my son — thou wilt find them . . . but

thou wilt be sure to restore them as soon as I am dead?'

"'How can I restore them,' said my father impatiently, 'unless you tell me where to find them?'

"'True — very true, my Adjai. Look, then, in the roll of matting which I use for a pillow, and there thou wilt find the three smaller gems and the large one. See — see the superintendent — Adjai — my — my . . .'

"A rapid convulsion, a moan, a heavy falling back of the outstretched hands, and my grandfather was dead."

The stranger broke off abruptly in his story, and laid his hand upon my sleeve.

"And now, sir," said he, "what do you suppose my father did?"

"Went into mourning, perhaps," said I, deeply interested.

"Nonsense, sir. He went to the roll of matting."

"And found the diamonds?"

"Not only *found* them, sir," said the stranger, laying his finger on his nose, — "not only found them; but — can't you guess?"

"Well, really," said I hesitating, "I — that is — if I should not be offending you by the supposition, I should guess — that he kept them."

"*Kept them*, sir! that's it," said the stranger, rubbing his hands triumphantly; "and, in my opinion, he was quite right too. Well, sir, to continue. As soon as my venerable ancestor had been consigned to the grave, my father left Balaghaut for Calcutta; and embarking there on board a Rus-

sian vessel, sailed for St. Petersburg. Arrived at that city, he consigned the gems to a skilful artist, by whom they were cut and polished. Sir, when cut and polished, it was found that the larger stone weighed no less than one hundred and ninety-three carats! My father knew that his fortune was made, and applied for an audience of the Empress Catherine II. The audience was granted, and the diamond shown; but the empress was unwilling to accede to my father's terms. He, believing that in time he should obtain his price, suffered the matter to drop; took a beautiful mansion overlooking the Neva; naturalised himself as a Russian subject, under the name of Peter Petroffski; and patiently bided his time. Thus nearly a twelvemonth passed; and my father, who had long since parted with the last of his golden mohurs, began to feel nervous. The event proved, however, that he had done wisely; for he one morning received a summons to the palace of Count Orloff, and sold his diamond to that nobleman for the sum of one hundred and four thousand one hundred and sixty-six pounds, thirteen shillings, and fourpence. Count Orloff was then Catherine's favourite; and to her, on her birthday, he presented this royal gift, some few days after he had made the purchase."

"Is it possible," I exclaimed, almost breathless with astonishment, — "is it possible that these are all facts?"

"Facts!" echoed the stranger indignantly. "Turn to the article on diamonds in any Encyclopædia, and convince yourself. Facts, indeed! Why, sir,

that inestimable gem now adorns the sceptre of Russia!"

"I beg your pardon," I said humbly; "pray go on, sir."

He seemed vexed, and remained silent; so I spoke again.

"In what year did this happen?"

"In the year 1772," he replied, falling back insensibly into his narrative. "My father now found himself in a position to command immense commercial influence; so he embarked a portion of his wealth in the fur trade, and became in process of time one of the foremost among the merchant-princes of Russia. During many years, he devoted himself entirely to the pursuit of riches; for gold, I must confess, was my father's weak point. At last, when he had obtained the reputation of being at the same time a millionnaire and an irreclaimable old bachelor, he married — married at sixty years of age, just thirty-eight years from the time when he left Balaghaut. The object of his choice was a rich widow, in every way suitable as regarded money and station; an excellent woman, and the best of mothers! I respect her memory."

Here the stranger paused, and wiped his eyes with a very fine cambric handkerchief, which filled the carriage with an overpowering perfume of patchouli. Presently, conquering his emotion, he resumed: —

"But for my birth, which took place within two years from the date of my father's wedding, the newly-created family of Petroffski must have become

extinct. As it was, therefore, my appearance was hailed with extravagant rejoicings. I was christened after my father, Peter Petroffski. My schoolfellows called me Peter the Second. I remember little of my boyhood, excepting that I always had plenty of roubles in my pocket; a pony; a mounted servant to attend me to and from school; and plenty of indulgence from all my teachers. No boy in the academy played so many pranks, or was so readily forgiven as myself; but money covers a multitude of sins, especially at St. Petersburg."

He paused for a moment, and a question which had long suggested itself to my mind, now rose to my lips.

"You have not yet told me," said I, "what your father did with the three smaller diamonds."

"Sir," replied the stranger, "I am coming to that presently."

So I bowed and waited in silence.

"From school I went to college; and, as my father's position excluded me from the college of nobles, I travelled into Germany, and studied for five years at the University of Heidelberg."

"'Peter,' said my father, as we parted, 'remember what a priceless life is yours. Above all things, my darling son, be careful not to injure your health by over-application.'

"Never was good advice more scrupulously followed. My studies at Heidelberg were pleasant rather than profound, and consisted chiefly of rowing, drinking, and fighting. By dint of strict attention to these duties, I earned for myself the rank of a

"mossy head;" and, indeed, I may say that I graduated in Bavarian beer, and took out my degree in sabre-cuts. At length I reached the age of twenty-one, and returned to St. Petersburg just in time for my birthday. On this occasion my father threw his house open for a succession of dinner-parties, balls, and suppers. On the morning of the great day, he called me into his study, signifying that he had something to say, and something to give to me. A small morocco case of triangular form was lying on his desk. From the moment I entered the room I felt convinced that this was intended for me; and my attention, I fear, wandered sadly away from the wise and affectionate discourse which my father (leaning back complacently in his great arm-chair) was pleased to bestow upon me. He said a great deal about the extent of his trade, and the satisfaction it was to him to have brought up a son who should succeed him in it; informed me that from this day I was to fill the position of junior partner, with a munificent share in the yearly profits; and finally, taking up the morocco case, bade me accept that as an earnest of his parental love. I opened it, and beheld a superb set of diamond studs. Each stone was a brilliant of the purest water, and about the size of an ordinary pea. Their value, I felt convinced, could not be less than three hundred guineas of your English money. For some moments I was speechless with delight and astonishment, and could scarcely stammer forth a word of thanks. Then my father smiled, and told me the history which I have just related to you. I had never heard

anything of this before. I knew only the common story current in the city, that my father had been a great Eastern merchant before he settled in Russia, and that he had sold a wonderful diamond to the Empress Catherine many years ago. If, therefore, I had been amazed before, I was now still more so, and listened to the narrative like a man in a dream.

"'And now, my dear boy,' said my father in conclusion, 'these diamonds, as I daresay you have already guessed, are the three remaining stones which I took from your grandfather's pillow of matting just sixty years ago.'

"From this time I led an enviable life. I owned the handsomest *droschky*, the finest horses, and the smallest tiger in St. Petersburg. My pleasure-yacht was the completest that lay alongside the quays of the Neva. My stall at the opera was next to that of young Count Skampsikoff, the great leader of fashion and folly, and close under the box of Prince Ruffantuff, who was at that time one of our most influential nobles, and Generalissimo of the Russian army. It was not long before Skampsikoff and I became the firmest friends in the world; and before six months were over, I was known far and near as the fastest, the richest, and the most reckless scapegrace about town.

"It was at this period, sir, that I first beheld the peerless Katrina."

The stranger paused, as if he expected me to be surprised; but finding that I only continued to

listen with a countenance indicative of polite attention, he looked at his watch, ran his fingers through his hair, hemmed twice or thrice, and then went on with his story.

"You will ask me, perhaps, — who was the peerless Katrina? Sir, she was a violet blooming upon a rock; a rainbow born out of the bosom of a thunder-cloud. She was the dream, the poetry, the passion of my life! Katrina, sir, was the only child of Prince Ruffantuff, whose name I have already mentioned. Strange that the fairest, the most ethereal of beings, should come of so stern a parentage! As Katrina was the gentlest of women, and the most loving, so was Ivan Ruffantuff the fiercest of soldiers and the severest of fathers. He carried the discipline of the camp into the privacy of his home, and made himself dreaded as much by his household as by his troops. I never saw so forbidding a countenance, or one more expressive of pride and defiance. Gazing upon the delicate creature seated beside him in his box, one wondered how nature could have played so strange a turn, and sought in vain for the faintest trace of apparent consanguinity between them. Prince Ivan was a giant in stature; Katrina was almost childlike in the graceful slightness of her proportions. Prince Ivan was swarthy of complexion, and his features were moulded after the flat unintellectual type of the Tatar tribes; Katrina's features were regular, classical, and Greek. Prince Ivan was proud and cruel; Katrina was loving, innocent — born for all purposes of tenderness and womanly compassion. What marvel, then, that I loved her?

Loved her, sir, as only few can love — loved her with all the force, and self-abandonment, and passion, of which man's nature is capable. I had never been in earnest before, but I was in earnest now — hopelessly in earnest, as I well knew; but despair itself fed my love with fresh energy, and obstacles only served to make me more determined. For a long time I loved her with my eyes and heart alone, as a devotee worships a saint upon an altar. I could but gaze upon her from afar. I had never even listened to the sound of her dear voice, though I would have died only to hear her pronounce my name. Night after night, during the whole opera-season, I sat and watched her from my stall. I heard no more of the music than if I had been in Siberia; I grew thin, and pale, and abstracted; I fell into a listless dreaming mood, and replied at random when spoken to; above all, I wandered like a ghost in and out of the *salons* and gaming-rooms, where I had of late been so eager in the pursuit of pleasure. At last Skampsikoff came to my rooms one morning, and remonstrated with me upon my unaccountable despondency.

"'You don't do justice to *me*, my dear fellow,' he said, twirling his moustachios. 'I have introduced you, set you going, made you, in point of fact, the fashion; and I take it rather unkindly that you should reflect so glaring a discredit upon my judgment. You might as well be at La Trappe, as far as your conversational powers go at present; and as for your looks, why, hang it, you know the least a man can do for society is to look pleasant. Are you

in debt, or does the dear papa draw his purse-strings too closely?'

"I shook my head. I had no debts but such as I could readily liquidate, and my father was as liberal to me as I could reasonably desire. It was not that.

"'Not that!' exclaimed Skampsikoff, 'well, then, you must be in love. Why, man, you blush! The thing's as clear as the sunlight; and Peter, the magnificent Peter, is in love! Now, by all the saints, this is too ridiculous! Who's the girl?'

"'The Princess Katrina,' I answered with a groan.

"Skampsikoff started, and whistled dismally.

"'The Princess Katrina!' he repeated.

"I laid my head down upon the table, and burst into tears.

"'I know that I am a fool,' I said, sobbing. 'I know that I have no chance — no hope — no resource but exile or death; and yet I love her, O, I love her, and I am dying — dying — dying, day by day!'

"My friend was moved.

"'Cheer up, Petroffski,' he said, laying his hand upon my shoulder. 'Cheer up; for I think I know of a plan by which to gain you an interview with her; and that once done, why, you must accomplish the rest for yourself. You will throw yourself at her feet. You will propose an elopement, or a secret marriage. She will not have the heart to refuse you. We will set relays of horses for you on the road to the nearest seaport; you will embark on board a

schooner, ready hired for the purpose; and, once off and away, who is to follow? Come, come, I see nothing but success for you; and if you will but look a trifle more lively, I'll set out at once to see about the ways and means.'

"I felt as if night had turned to day on hearing these words.

"'Shampsikoff,' I said, 'you have saved my life!'

"That evening, to my surprise, I saw him enter Prince Ruffantuff's box in company with a nobleman of his acquaintance, and be presented in due form both to Ivan and his daughter. He did not remain there very long, but contrived to enter into conversation with Katrina. Just before he left the box, he nodded to me and waved his hand. She instantly raised her glass. They exchanged a few sentences. She looked again; and I felt as if the whole theatre were turning round. In a few moments he had made his bow, taken his leave, and returned to his stall by my side.

"'The ball is rolling,' he said, rubbing his hands gaily; 'the ball is rolling, and the game's begun. She saw me recognise you, and naturally asked me who you were. 'A fellow,' said I, 'with the best heart and the handsomest studs in St. Petersburg.' 'Of horses?' asked the fair Katrina. 'No,' said I; 'of diamonds.' Whereupon she looked again. 'Not but that he has horses, too,' I added, 'and plenty of them. He's a noble fellow, and my most intimate friend; but he is far from happy.' She surveyed you with more interest than ever. There's nothing

like telling a woman that a man's unhappy. She's sure to be half in love with him directly. 'He looks pale,' said the fair Katrina. 'What is the cause of his sorrow?' I smiled and shook my head. 'Princess Katrina,' I said meaningly, '*you* are the very last person in the world to whom I could confide that secret.' With this I took my leave; and I think you ought to be very much obliged to me.'

"And I was very much obliged to him, especially when I saw that Katrina's attention wandered continually that evening from the stage to myself. Once or twice our eyes met. The first time she started; the second time, she blushed; and I thought myself the happiest fellow in the world.

"Henceforth, life assumed for me a new and beautiful aspect. Somehow or another (whether through the hints dropped by my friend, or her own attentive study of my eloquent glances, I know not) the fair Katrina became aware of my passion, and was not so cruel as to discourage it. Sometimes, when they stood near me in the crush-room, she would drop her handkerchief or her fan, that I might have the opportunity of handing it to her. Sometimes she left a flower from her bouquet lying upon the front of her box, that I might go round and take it when she and her father were gone. At last she accorded me an interview."

The stranger buried his face in his hands, and sighed heavily.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, in a broken voice. "My — my emotions on recalling this portion of my

history are so overwhelming, that (with your permission) I must smoke a cigar."

I have, be it known, a particular aversion to the odour of tobacco. To speak plainly, it disagrees with me. However, in this instance I waved my objections; the stranger lit his Havanna; and presently the story of my diamond-studs went on.

"Those only who have loved," said the stranger, "can picture the condition of my mind during the hours that preceded that eventful interview. I could think of nothing, speak of nothing, but Katrina. To me the universe was all Katrina, and there was only nothingness beyond. Dusk came at last — the dusk of a winter's evening, when the tinkling bells of the *droschky*-horses, and the guttural 'Yukh, yukh!' of the drivers, rose from the streets and public squares, where the snow lay thickly. Then dusk turned rapidly to night; the frosty stars came out; and I wrapped myself in my cloak of furs, and went forth alone on foot.

"Swiftly and silently I traversed the few thoroughfares that separated our dwellings; and, gliding along by the wall at the back of Prince Ivan's gardens, stationed myself in a deep angle of shadow, and waited patiently. Presently a small side-door opened, and an old woman, closely muffled, looked out.

"'What art thou doing there?' she asked in a shrill tremulous tone.

"'Waiting for the sun to shine,' I replied in the words of the signal which we had previously agreed upon.

"The woman extended her hand to me, led me

in, closed the door, and so guided me in utter darkness through a long passage. Presently I saw a thread of brilliant light; then a door was thrown suddenly open, and I found myself in a brilliantly lighted apartment. Here my conductress desired me to wait, and hobbled out of the room. A quarter of an hour elapsed thus. I counted the seconds by a time-piece on a console-table; but every minute seemed to be the length of an hour. At last the door opened. I turned — I fell at her feet — it was Katrina!

"For some moments neither of us spoke. I do not now recollect which first broke the delicious silence; but I believe it was myself. The remembrance of what was said has altogether passed away from me. It seems to me now like a dream, or the dream of a dream, so bright, so far away, so unsubstantial!

"There was a fauteuil close at hand. I placed her in it; I knelt down before her; I bent my head upon her knees, and covered her little hands with kisses. And so we told each other the story of our love, — a broken, faltering story, interrupted by exclamations and questions, tears and kisses; but the sweetest that is told by human lips.

"Suddenly, — while I was yet kneeling at her feet, while my arm clasped her waist, and one of her dear hands rested on my head, — we heard voices close at hand.

"'Her highness,' said one, 'is in her boudoir overlooking the terrace.'

"'Good,' replied another, at which we both shuddered. 'You need not announce me.'

"'Alas!' cried Katrina, in an agony of terror, 'it is my father!'

"The heavy steps came nearer; I sprang to my feet; I encircled her with my arm, for she was about to fall; and before I could draw another breath the door flew open, and he entered.

"For one brief instant, surprise seemed to usurp every other feeling in Prince Ivan's breast. Then his stern features flushed crimson, and a terrible expression glared in his cruel eye. He was in full uniform, and (never stirring a foot from the threshold, where he had paused upon opening the door) plucked a pistol from his belt. Without a word, without a pause, he pointed the weapon at my head.

"There was an explosion, a piercing shriek, and —

"And Katrina — Katrina, my beloved, my adored, had flung herself between us, and received the deadly charge!

"I caught her as she fell, senseless and bleeding; I uttered wild words of hatred, of love, of despair, of cursing; I threw myself upon the ground beside her, and strove to stay the purple stream that gushed from her bosom. Alas, it was in vain! Before the smoke had cleared away, before Ivan himself well knew the deed he had committed, all was over, and the beautiful Katrina had passed away to that heaven for — for which — —"

The stranger's voice faltered, and, letting down

the window next to him, he leaned out for a few minutes in the evening air. When he drew in his head again, I offered him my pocket-flask of brandy. He emptied it at a draught, returned it to me with a long-drawn sigh, threw away the end of his cigar, and resumed: —

"You will forgive me, sir, if I hasten over this portion of my narrative. It is of a nature so agonising to my feelings, that I must content myself with merely stating a few leading facts, and passing on to subsequent events. Prince Ivan, struck with remorse and horror, solicited the emperor's leave to retire from the army, and entered a monastery near Moscow. I received an intimation from the Government that I should do well to travel for the next eight or ten years. It was a polite form of exile, to which I was compelled to accede, greatly to the sorrow of my parents. For my own part, I was utterly heart-broken, and cared little what became of me. I went direct to Paris, and plunged into a course of reckless dissipation. Billiards, race-horses, dinner-parties, betting, and follies of every description, soon brought upon me the expostulations of my family. But I was careless of everything — of health, fortune, reputation, — all. When my father refused any longer to supply my wilful extravagances, I incurred innumerable debts, and, giving no heed to the consequence, spent and drank, and gambled still. At length, by some unaccountable chance, a rumour got about that my father had disinherited me. From this moment I could find no more credit. My friends dropped off one by one; and, except by

a few blacklegs, and two or three goodnatured chums, I found myself deserted by all my former companions. And still, such was my infatuation, instead of reforming — instead of meriting my father's aid and forgiveness — I only sank lower and lower, and continued to tread the downward path of vice.

"An event, however, occurred which altogether changed the course of my career. I had been dining with some wild fellows at the *Maison Dorée*. After dinner, when we were all very nearly intoxicated, we called as usual for cards and dice. I soon lost the contents of my purse; then I staked my cabriolet, and lost it; my favourite horse, and lost him; my watch, chain, and seals, and lost them. On this, somewhat startled, I paused.

"'I'll play no more to-night,' I said doggedly.

"'Pshaw!' cried my antagonist. 'Throw again; next time you'll be sure to win.'

"But I shook my head and rose from the table.

"'I'm a beggar already,' said I, with a forced laugh.

"De Lancy shrugged his shoulders.

"'As you please,' he replied somewhat contemptuously. 'I only wanted you to have your revenge.'

"I turned back irresolutely.

"'Will you play for my house and furniture?' I asked.

"'Willingly.'

"So I sat down again, and in a few throws more found myself homeless. This time I was

reckless. I poured out a bumper of wine, and tossed it off at a draught.

"'If I had a wife,' I cried madly, 'I would stake her next; but I have nothing left now, gentlemen — nothing but wine, and liberty, and myself. As this is no slave-country, you won't play, I suppose, for the latter?'

"'Not I,' said De Lancy, sweeping his gains into his hat. 'I suppose you have no objection to make out that little statement of the house, cabriolet, and so forth, in writing, have you?'

"There was an easy, satisfied, sarcastic triumph in his tone that irritated me more than the loss of all the rest. I made no reply; but, tearing a leaf from my pocket-book, wrote hastily, and half threw the paper at him.

"'Take it, sir,' I said bitterly; 'and I wish you joy of your property.'

"He surveyed the acknowledgment coolly, put it in his purse, and said with a sneering smile: —

"'Does it not seem a pity now that you should have absolutely nothing left whereby to retrieve these things? Another throw, another billet of a hundred francs, and perhaps they would all be yours again. By the way, you forgot your diamond studs all this time. Will you try once more?'

"And he threw the dice as he spoke. They turned up sixes.

"'You might have thrown that, Petroffski,' he said, pointing to them.

"I was sorely tempted; but I resisted.

"'No, no,' I said, 'not my diamond studs. They are an heir-loom; and — and I will write to my father to-morrow.'

"'Like a penitent good little boy,' said De Lancy, with an impatient gesture. 'Nonsense, man; throw for the studs. I feel convinced you'll win.'

"'Say, rather, you feel convinced that *you'll* win, De Lancy. Have you not stripped me of enough already?'

"'Insolent!' he cried. 'Do you think I value the paltry winnings?'

"'I think you grasp all you can get.'

"'Liar!'

"The word had scarcely passed his lips, when I flung a glass of wine in his face. In another moment, all was confusion. Blows were exchanged, the table was overturned, the lights extinguished. I received a severe wound upon the temple from falling against the open door, and fainted.

"When I came to myself, I was stretched upon a sofa in an adjoining room, with a surgeon bending over me. The morning sun was streaming in at the windows. My companions were all gone, no one knew whither.

"'What is the matter,' I asked, faintly. 'Am I dying?'

"The surgeon shook his head.

"'You are severely hurt,' he said, 'but with care and quiet you will recover. Had I not better communicate with your friends?'

"'Write to my father,' I murmured. 'You will find his — his address in my pocket-book.'

"The surgeon took up pen and paper, and wrote immediately, partly from my dictation, and partly from his opinion of my condition. He then said that I must not be moved, and must, above all things, avoid excitement. As he uttered these words, and rose to take his leave, a sudden idea, or, rather, a sudden presentiment, struck me.

"I put up my hand to my bosom. *My diamond-studs were gone!*

"After this, I remember no more. The shock produced upon me that very effect which the surgeon had been so anxious to avoid. I lost consciousness again; and on being restored to life, passed into a state of delirious fever. For many weeks I lay upon the threshold of the grave; and when I at length recovered, it was to find my dear father and mother at my side. They had hastened over with succour and forgiveness, and to their tender cares I owed a second existence. As soon as my health was tolerably established, my father went back for a few weeks to Russia, disposed of his business, realized his fortune in money, and returned to France an independant man. This excellent parent did not long survive the change. Within two years from the period of his establishment in Paris he died; and my mother survived him only a few months. They left me to the enjoyment of a princely fortune, which former experience has taught me to use worthily. I neither drink nor gamble. I pass my life chiefly in travelling. I have never married, and I do not think

it likely that I ever shall marry; for Katrina is ever present in my heart, and when I lost her, I lost the power of loving. Since that period, fifteen years have elapsed. I have wandered through many lands: trodden the ruins of Thebes, and waked the echoes of Pompeii; shot the buffalo on the Western prairies, and pursued the wild-boar amid the forests of Westphalia. I am now on my way to Denmark; but purpose remaining a few days in Brussels, where probably I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again."

The stranger bowed as he said this, and I bowed in return.

"And now, sir," he continued, "from the night that I lost them in a scuffle at the *Maison Dorée*, till this evening when I behold them upon your shirt-front, I never saw those diamond studs again. I have sought for them, advertised them, offered rewards innumerable for them, during the space of fifteen years — but up to the present moment all has been in vain. Not for their intrinsic worth — for I could purchase plenty like them — but for the associations connected with them, do I place so high a value upon those stones. They are the same which my grandfather concealed in his pillow of matting; which my father gave to me upon my birthday; which first drew upon me the eyes of my lost Katrina. Surely, sir, you will acknowledge that this is a pardonable weakness, and also that the studs are really mine?"

"Your tale, sir," said I, politely, but firmly, "is indeed very surprising, and I may say very con-

clusive; but the case is so singular, the studs belong with so much apparent right to both of us, that I really think we must refer all decision on the point of ownership to the law. You cannot expect me to relinquish them without first ascertaining whether I really am compelled legally to do so."

"My dear sir," replied the stranger, "I had no idea of asking you to relinquish the studs without due compensation. If you will do me the favour once more to show me that little bill (the amount of which I have forgotten), I shall be delighted to give you a cheque for the same sum."

But I had no wish to part from my studs.

"Excuse me, sir," I said, somewhat uneasily, "but you have not yet proved to me that these stones are those of which you were robbed in the *Maison Dorée.* Make it evident to me that this is not a case of accidental resemblance, and . . ."

"Sir," interrupted the stranger, "when my father gave me those studs on my birthday, he caused my initials to be engraved in minute characters upon one of the facets at the back. To do this was a great expense. When done, it deteriorated, perhaps, from the market-value of the gems; but it made them infinitely more precious to me. If, sir, you will have the goodness to take them out of your shirt, I will show you the initials P. P. upon the under side."

By this time the train had reached the suburbs of Brussels, and in a few moments more we should arrive, I well knew, at the station.

"I think, sir," said I, "we had better defer this

examination till to-morrow. We have almost gained our destination; and by the feeble light of this roof-lamp I —"

The stranger brought out a small silver-box filled with wax-matches.

"By the light of one of these convenient little articles, sir," he said, "I will engage that you shall see the letters. I am most anxious to convince you of the identity of the stones. Pray, oblige me by taking them out."

I could no longer find any pretence for refusal. The studs were attached each to each by a slender chain, and to examine one I was forced to take out all. As I was doing this, the speed of the train slackened.

The stranger lit one of his matches, and I examined the stones in tremulous impatience.

"Upon my honour, sir," I said, very earnestly, "I can perceive nothing upon them."

"Had you not better put on your glasses?" asked the stranger.

"*Bruxelles?*" shouted the guard. "*Changement de convoie pour Gand, Bruges, et Ostend.*"

Hang the glasses! they were so misty I could not see an inch before me.

"Allow me to hold the studs for you while you rub them up," said the stranger, politely.

I thanked him, polished the glasses upon my sleeve, held them up to the light, put them on.

"Now, sir," I said, "you may light another match, and give me the diamonds."

The stranger made no reply.

"I will not trouble you, sir, to hold them any nger," I said.

I turned; I uttered a shriek of dismay; I stumbled ver my own portmanteau, which stood between me nd the doorway.

"*Monsieur veut descendre?*" said the guard, with grin.

"Where is the stranger?" I cried, leaping out, nd dancing frantically about the platform. "Where s the stranger? — where is Peter Petroffski? — here are my diamond-studs?"

"Has Monsieur lost anything?" asked the railway interpreter, touching his hat.

"He had my studs in his hand! I turned my ack for a moment, and he was off! Did any one ee him?"

"Will monsieur have the goodness to describe he person of this thief?"

"He was tall, thin, very dark, with black eyes nd an aquiline nose."

"And long hair hanging down upon his shoulers?" asked the interpreter.

"Yes, yes."

"And he wore a large cloak with a high furollar?"

"The same — the very same."

The porters and bystanders smiled, and glanced neaningly at one another. The interpreter shrugged is shoulders.

"Every effort shall be made," he said, shaking is head; "but I regret to say that we have little rospect of success. This man's name is Vaudon.

He is an experienced swindler, and evades capture with surprising dexterity. It is not three weeks since he committed a similar robbery on this very line, and the police have been in pursuit of him ever since without effect."

"Then his name is not Peter Petroffski?"

"Certainly not, monsieur."

"And he is no Russian?"

"No more than I am."

"And — and his grandfather, who was a Hindoo — and the Empress Catherine — and the beautiful princess who was shot — and — and . . ."

"And monsieur may be assured," said the interpreter with a smile, "that whatever story was related to him by Pierre Vaudon was from beginning to end — a fiction!"

Quite chopfallen, I groaned aloud, and took my melancholy way to the Hotel de Ville. There I stated my case, and was assured that no pains would be spared on the part of the police to apprehend the offender.

No pains were spared, and no money either; but all was in vain. From that day to this I never set eyes upon my diamond studs.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GUARD-SHIP AT THE AIRE.

"At Christmas time," said the stranger in the chimney-corner, "folks seem to think themselves privileged to ask other folks to tell stories; but then it is not every man's vocation to tell stories. It comes especially hard on a plain man, who makes no pretence of knowing more than his neighbours. I am a plain man, and it comes hard upon me. I never wrote a page in a magazine, or a paragraph in a newspaper, in my life. How, then, can I be expected to tell a story?"

Having said which, the stranger relapsed into silence, and stared moodily at the fire.

On this particular evening, being Christmas Eve, and rather stormy, with a strong wind and mist blowing up from the sea, our gathering at the "Tintagel Arms" was somewhat smaller than usual. The stranger had dropped in about two hours before, stabled his horse, engaged his bed, and installed himself in the chimney-corner as comfortably as if he had been an old inhabitant of the place, and one of ourselves. Up to this moment, however, he had scarcely opened his lips, or taken his eyes from off the logs that blazed upon the hearth. We looked at each other, and no one seemed prepared with a reply.

"Besides," added the stranger, as if it were an afterthought, and wholly unanswerable, "the days of 'Arabian Nights' are over. We want facts in these times — facts, gentlemen — facts."

"And surely there are facts in the life of every individual," observed the schoolmaster, "which, if truthfully related, could not fail to impart both instruction and amusement. We prefer facts, sir; when we can get them. Indeed, I dare affirm that within the four walls of this parlour, many a poor seaman has, with his rude narrative of travel and peril, given us more genuine pleasure than could the best author of the best fiction that ever was written."

(The schoolmaster, I should observe, is the orator of our little society. He has seen better days, is a classical scholar, and has, at times, quite a parliamentary style. We are proud of him up at the "Tintagel Arms;" and he knows it.)

"Then do you mean to tell me," said the stranger testily, "that you impose this tax on every traveller who happens to put up at the house?"

"By no means, sir," replied the schoolmaster. "We only desire that every traveller who joins the society in this parlour should conform to the rules by which this society is governed. There is the coffee-room for whoever may prefer it."

"And those rules?"

"And those rules are, that each person present shall tell a story, sing a song, or read aloud for the amusement of the rest."

"Perhaps," suggested the landlord, "the gentleman would prefer to sing a song?"

"I can't sing," growled the traveller.

"Some visitors prefer to read a scene from Shakespeare," hinted the parish clerk.

"Might as well ask me to dance on the tight-rope," retorted the traveller, fiercely.

A dead silence ensued, in the midst of which the landlady brought in our customary bowl of punch, and the schoolmaster filled the glasses. The stranger tasted his punch, gave a nod of approval, drank the rest at a draught, and coughed uneasily.

"I can't sing," said he, after several minutes, during which no one had spoken; "and I can't read plays; and I can't tell stories. But if plain facts will do, I don't mind telling the company about an — an adventure, I suppose I may call it, that happened to myself one Christmas Eve, some two-and-thirty years ago."

"Sir," said the schoolmaster, "we shall be delighted."

"That's more than I was," retorted the traveller; "for it was just the most disagreeable affair that I ever went through in my life."

With this, he sent up his glass to be refilled; and, continuing to stare steadily into the fire, as if he was reading every word of his narrative from the pictures in the embers, thus began: —

"I am a commercial traveller, and have been on the road these last five-and-thirty years; that is to say, ever since I was twenty years of age. Mine is the Manchester line of business, and I have travelled in most parts of England and Wales, as well as in some parts of France and Germany, in my time.

At the period of which I am about to speak, I was in the employment of Warren, Gray, and Company (then a famous Manchester firm of half a century's standing), and my beat lay through the north of France, all about those parts which lie between Calais, Paris, and Cherbourg — a wide district, in the form of a great irregular angle, as you may see by the map.

"Well, as I have said, it was two-and-thirty years ago; or, if you like it better, Anno Domini 1830. William IV. had just become King of England, and Louis Philippe had just become King of the French. It was an exciting time. The Continent was all over in a restless, revolutionary state; and France, divided between Orleanists and Bourbons, Napoleonists and Republicans, was in a worse condition of fever and ferment than any of her neighbours.

"I hate politics, gentlemen. I am no politician now, and I was no politician then; but being a young fellow at that time, and better acquainted with the Continent than most Englishmen of my age and station (for people didn't travel abroad then as they do now), I gave myself great airs of superiority, and fancied I knew a vast deal about everything. When I was at home, I bragged about foreign life and manners; gave myself out as a wonderful judge of French wines; and loudly despised our homely English cookery. When I was abroad, on the contrary, I became violently national, boasted of British liberties, British arms, and British commerce, and never failed to avail myself, if possible, of a chance

allusion to Wellington, or Nelson, or Waterloo. In short, as I said before, I loved to assume airs of superiority, and that disposition by no means helped to make me popular. I was a fool for my pains, of course: and I suffered for it afterwards ... but I must not run in advance of my story.

"Having been in Paris (which, you will remember, was the farthest point inland of my district) all July and August, I began travelling northwards again in September, according to the commands of my employers. There was no Northern of France Railway at that time, and the traveller who was unprovided with his own vehicle had no choice between the lumbering diligence and the scarcely less lumbering *calèche*. I, however, had my own gig, which I had brought over from England, and a capital brown horse bought at Compiègne; and I well remember how I used to dash past the diligences, clatter into the towns, and endeavour to eclipse all the *commis voyageurs* whom I encountered on the road.

"Having left Paris in September, I calculated on getting through the whole work of my northern district in about ten weeks, and hoped to arrive in England in time for Christmas-day. The change of government, however, had given an unusual impetus to international trade, and I found business accumulating on my hands day by day, to such an extent, that I soon gave up all hope of reaching home before the latter end of January. As Christmas approached, and I continued travelling slowly in a north and north-westerly direction, I began to wonder

where my Christmas-day would be spent after all. At one time I thought it would be at Lisieux; at another at Caen; and at last I made sure it would be at Bayeux. I was mistaken, however, in all my conjectures, as you will hear presently.

"On the night of the 23rd of December, I slept at a populous little market town called Crépigny, which lies about eighteen miles inland, and about midway between Caen and Bayeux. On the morning of the 24th I rose unusually early, and started soon after daybreak; for I had a long day's journey before me, and hoped to reach Bayeux that night. I could not, however, take the direction road, being bound first for St. Angely, a small coast-town lying near the mouth of the Aire, just opposite Portsmouth on the map. My only chance, therefore, was to make a long day, and, if possible, leave St. Angely early enough to allow of my pushing on to Bayeux that afternoon. My route from Crépigny to St. Angely lay across a bleak open country thinly planted with orchards, and scattered over here and there with villages, farms, and desolate, half-ruined country-houses. A thick white frost lay like snow upon the landscape. A grey mist brooded over the horizon. A bitter wind swept every now and then across the plain, and shook the bare poplars that bordered the road on either side. Sometimes I passed a cart loaded with firewood, or a stout country wench in a warm cloak and sabôts; but I had all the road to myself, for the most part; and a very dreary road it was. It grew drearier, too, with every mile. Habitations became fewer and farther between. Every

blast of wind brought with it a cloud of fine white dust; and now and then, as I reached the summit of a little eminence, or turned the shoulder of a sand slope, I caught distant glimpses of the sea.

"It was about eleven o'clock in the morning when I neared the end of my first stage, and came in sight of St. Angely-sur-Aire; a melancholy river-side town, consisting of a singular irregular street about a mile in length, bordered by houses on one side and quays on the other.

"Having dashed along the quays, and pulled up, with my customary flourish, at the door of the principal inn, I alighted, ordered lunch, sent my horse to the stable, and went out into the town. I soon found, however, that there was no business to be done there. The place was too remote and too primitive; being peopled chiefly by small ship-owners, boat-builders, colliers, fishermen, and sailors. The inhabitants, besides, were not so friendly as in the more frequented towns. I could not help feeling that I was looked upon with disfavour as I walked along the streets. The children hooted after me. The shopkeepers were scarcely civil. It was evident that an Englishman was both an unusual and unwelcome visitor in the lonely little town of St. Angely-sur-Aire.

"Going back, in no pleasant frame of mind, to the *Cheval Blanc*, I found my lunch prepared in a corner of the public-room, beside a window overlooking the river. A large wood fire blazed upon the hearth; a coloured print of Napoleon at Marengo hung over the chimney-piece; and at a long oak

table in the centre of the sanded floor sat some five or six Frenchmen, drinking sour wine, smoking bad cigars, and playing dominoes.

"They looked up sullenly as I came in, and muttered among themselves. I could not distinguish what the words were; but I felt sure they related in some uncomplimentary manner to myself; and this, as you may well believe, did not help to make me more amiable. In short, being but a hot-tempered, conceited young fellow at the best of times, and being, moreover, on this occasion particularly annoyed by the reception I had met with in the town, I gave myself more airs than ever, found fault with the cutlets, abused the wine, worried the waiter, and made myself, I have no doubt, eminently disagreeable.

"'Call this Bordeaux, indeed!' said I, superciliously. 'In England we would not buy it for vinegar. Have you nothing better?'

"'Nothing, monsieur,' replied the waiter humbly. "'We keep only two qualities, and monsieur ordered the best.'

"'In England!' ejaculated one of the domino players — a shabby fellow in a faded uniform, who looked like a custom-house officer — 'Bah! What do they know about wine in England? They grow no grapes. They are thankful over there for the washings of our vats.'

"Stupid as the insult was, the blood rushed to my face, and tingled in my fingers. I longed to contradict the man; but it was of no use getting into a broil, if a little prudence would avert it. So

I held my tongue, and affected not to hear. His companions laughed, and presently he spoke again.

"'What can you expect,' pursued he, 'in a country where the land is all swamp, and the air all fog, and every man keeps a shop? Monsieur there, you see, doesn't know wine from vinegar. How should he? The English drink nothing but beer and tea!"

"I could bear it no longer.

"'Stop there, friend,' said I, boiling over with rage, but endeavouring to speak calmly. 'It's a pity you should allow yourself to express opinions upon a subject of which you know nothing.'

"'Did monsieur speak?'

"'I did speak. I said you expressed opinions on a subject of which you know nothing."

"'It appears to me, monsieur, that I have a right to express what opinions I please.'

"'Not when they are offensive to others.'

"'Pardon, monsieur — how could I tell that my opinions would offend? If I said that England was all swamp and fog, what then? Monsieur did not make the climate of his native country. If I said ...'

"'You know nothing about either our customs or our climate,' I interrupted, angrily.

"'And if I said that the English were a nation of shopkeepers,' pursued he, 'have I not the authority of the great Napoleon for that statement? Is not monsieur himself a commercial traveller?'

"The cool impertinence of the fellow, and the

undisguised amusement of his friends, enraged me beyond all the bounds of prudence.

"'Shopkeepers or not,' I retorted, 'we have beaten the French too often to care for a nickname! Were they shopkeepers who routed you at Trafalgar? Were they shopkeepers before whom your Old Guard turned and fled at Waterloo? Were they ——'

"My words were drowned in a torrent of imprecations. Furious and gesticulating, every Frenchman was instantly on his feet; whilst I, expecting nothing less than an immediate attack, snatched up a chair, and prepared for a desperate defence. At this moment, however, the landlord, alarmed by the noise, rushed in and placed himself between us.

"'Peace! peace, I say, gentlemen!' cried he. 'I allow no quarrelling here. What! six against one? I am ashamed of you!'

"'Death of my life! shall we be insulted by a beggarly Englishman?' stormed one.

"'Or suffer the honour of France to be called in question?' shouted another.

"'Or the memory of our *grande armée* to be reviled?' added a third.

"'Nonsense — nonsense!' expostulated the landlord. 'I'll bet a *louis d'or* that monsieur meant nothing of the kind. He is an Englishman; you are Frenchmen. You don't understand each other — *voilà tout!* Remember the duties of hospitality, gentlemen, and recollect that monsieur is a stranger. I'll be sworn that monsieur was not the first to begin.'

"'*Parbleu!* I was the first to begin — I confess

it,' said the customs officer, good-temperedly. 'I put monsieur out by abusing his country.'

"'And I confess that I lost my temper too easily,' replied I; 'and said much that I should be ashamed to repeat.'

"'Suppose, messieurs, you make your peace over another bottle of wine,' suggested the landlord, rubbing his hands.

"'With all my heart,' said I, 'if these gentlemen will allow me to call for one!'

"The Frenchmen laughed, stroked their moustachios, shook hands, and forgot their anger as readily as if nothing had happened — all except one, a bronzed, grey-bearded man in a blue blouse and gaiters, who pulled his cap angrily over his eyes, muttered something about *maudit Anglais*, and strode out of the room.

"'*Peste!* that old François is as savage as a bear,' said one of my late opponents.

"'He is an old soldier,' observed another, apologetically. 'He served under Napoleon, and he hates the English.'

"'I am really sorry if I have hurt the feelings of a brave man,' said I. 'Can we not induce him to come back and chink glasses with us?"

"'No — no; let him alone. He is a savage-tempered fellow, and best left to himself. Your health, monsieur, and a pleasant journey!'

"And with this, the good-natured *garçons* drew round the fire, pulled out their cigars, smacked their lips over their wine, and chatted away as pleasantly as if we had made each other's acquaintance under

the most agreeable auspices in the world. When the first bottle was emptied, I called for another, and by the time we had done justice to the second, it was nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, and fully time for me to begin my journey.

"'If monsieur is going to Crépigny,' said a young farmer, whom his companions called Adolphe, 'I will gladly take a seat in his chaise as far as the cross-roads.'

"'Unfortunately, I came from Crépigny this morning, and am now bound for Bayeux,' I replied.

"'For Bayeux? *Peste!* then monsieur has a good long road before him.'

"'How far do you call it? I did not think it was more than three leagues.'

"'Three leagues? — nearer five.'

"Five French leagues, and only another hour of daylight before me! That was more than I had bargained for.

"'Monsieur had better let his horse go back to the stable, and stay with us to-night at the *Cheval Blanc*,' suggested the landlord, obsequiously.

I shook my head.

"'No, no,' I said. 'That will never do. I want to spend my Christmas-day at Bayeux to-morrow. Five leagues, you say?'

"'Full five by the road,' answered the custom-house officer. 'But there is a shorter way, if monsieur can only find it.'

"'You would not send monsieur by the river?' interposed the landlord.

"'Why not? It will save him a good league.'

"'*Mon Dieu*, it is not safe for a stranger — especially after dusk!'

"'Safe, Maître Pierre! Why it's as safe as the high road when the tide is out,' replied the other, contemptuously. 'Listen, monsieur. About five kilometres from St. Angely, the Aire empties itself into the sea. It is but a narrow river, as you see it here — narrow and deep; but out there it gets wide and shallow; wider than the Seine at Paris. *Eh bien*, monsieur, about four kilometres from hence, and about one before you reach the mouth of the Aire, you come to a place called *L'Eau Perdu*. It is just an arm of the river — a reach in fact, which at high water feeds a small stream, over which you would have to cross by the bridge at Creuilly if you went round by the high road; but which, if you take the way by the coast, you can drive across as easily as possible when it is low tide. There is no danger in the world, monsieur may take my word for it; and it saves a *détour* of at least a league.'

"'Monsieur had much better not attempt it,' said mine host of the *Cheval Blanc*.

"'Nay, I am not afraid of attempting it, if I can but find my way,' replied I. "My horse is no longer fresh, and a league is a league.'

"'Monsieur cannot fail to go rightly,' said the custom-house officer. 'You drive straight forward, and take the first road to the left past the church. Follow that road till you come to a lane leading to a little inn called the *Bon Christophe*, and then ask any one to show you the best place to drive over. The house stands just on the brink of *L'Eau Perdu*,

and in sight of the mouth of the Aire. If it is dusk, there is always a light burning at the revenue station on the opposite side.'

"'A thousand thanks,' said I, jumping into my chaise, and gathering up the reins. 'You are quite sure the tide will be out?"

"'The tide is out now,' replied the custom-house officer, taking out his watch, 'and will not turn till ten minutes past four o'clock. If it had turned already, monsieur would still be in good time, for the reach does not fill till nearly high tide. Monsieur will have to drive over a quarter of a mile of muddy bottom. He will get his wheels dirty — *voilà tout!*'

"'I'm not afraid of that misfortune,' said I laughing. Adieu, gentlemen. May we soon meet again to pledge our goodwill in another bottle of Maître Pierre's Bordeaux!'

"With this and a profusion of bows, adieux, and good wishes, we parted; I driving off at a rapid pace that brought the inhabitants of St. Angely-sur-Aire to their windows as I rattled past, and my friends of the *Cheval Blanc* crowding round the threshold of that decent little hostelry, to do honour to my departure.

"I found my way easily enough past the church, and down the road to the left, along which I had been directed. It was not by any means a pleasant drive. The afternoon was dull and raw; the road was rough; the grey sea-mist thickened in the distance, and the wind was piercingly cold. The distance, too, proved greater than I had expected, and I was obliged, by the bad condition of the road, to

drive very slowly. In the meantime the mist continued to thicken and the light to fade, so that by the time I reached the lane it was almost dusk. Such a lane as it was, too! — rough as a ploughed field and wet as a pond, with stones over which the horse stumbled, and ruts into which the wheels sank at every yard. Bad as the road had been, it was nothing to this. However, it was too late to turn back, so I dismounted, led my horse, and endeavoured to make the best of my position. The lane terminated presently in a broad space of waste ground, in the midst of which I saw the dark outline of a house and the glimmer of a lighted casement. Concluding that this must be the *auberge* of the good Christopher, I at once turned my horse's head in that direction, and led him, as well as I could, over the uneven ground that lay between. As I drew near the house I heard voices; but it was not till I came within a yard or two of the gate on which they were leaning that I could distinguish the forms of the two men who were speaking.

"'Holà!' said I, 'is this the auberge, of the *Bon Christophe?*'

"'That it is, monsieur, and I am the landlord, at monsieur's service,' replied the shorter of the two, stepping forward and holding the gate open. 'Monsieur will please to enter? We have excellent beds — a good stable — every accommodation for travellers!'

"'Thanks; but I only want to be directed to the best place for driving over the reach here. The tide is out, I believe?"

"'Yes, monsieur, the tide is out — that is to say, it is just about to turn,' replied the landlord in a tone of disappointment.

"'And I can cross with safety?'

"The landlord hesitated.

"'Because, if not,' I added, suspecting that he would keep me if he could, 'I shall drive back at once to St. Angely-sur-Aire, and sleep at the *Cheval Blanc*.'

"'The reach is quite passable,' said the taller man, abruptly.

"'Oh, yes — it is passable,' admitted the landlord. 'Monsieur has but to drive straight for the light at the revenue-station. He cannot go wrong.'

"'Will you be so obliging, then, as to send some one just to put me in the right way?'

"'Certainly, monsieur; I will call . . .'

"'No need to call any one,' interposed the other. 'I am going by the beach. Follow me. Good night, friend Collet.'

"'Good night, François,' replied the landlord, somewhat sulkily. 'Be sure you explain to monsieur the difference between the two lights.'

"'Bah! do you take me for a fool?'

"Saying which, my guide pushed hastily forward, and I followed. It was too dark to see his features distinctly; but something in his height, in his gait, in the tone of his voice, struck me as not wholly unfamiliar. Then his name — the landlord called him François. Was not François the name of the old soldier whom I saw three hours since in the public room of the *Cheval Blanc?* It was quite

possible that he might be the same man. Nay, the more I thought of it, the more I felt sure of his identity. And what if he were the same? Was it worth while to allude to the *fracas* of the afternoon? Surely not. He did not seem to have recognized me, and it might only lead to further disagreement. I deemed it better, on the whole, to say nothing. These thoughts flashed through my mind in less time than it takes to relate them. Just as I came to my decision, I found we were descending a sandy slope, beyond which lay what seemed to be a wide tract of mud and shingle. Far away across this waste, showing dimly through the mist, and distant, apparently, about half a mile from each other, gleamed two lights, one red and one white. My guide halted suddenly.

"'*Voilà*,' said he. 'There are the two beacons — one on board the guard-ship at the mouth of the Aire; the other at the revenue-station across the reach. Do you see both?'

"'Yes, I see both plainly.'

"'Then drive straight for the red one.'

"'Thanks. Is the bottom tolerably level? Need I lead the horse?'

"'No; it is all smooth. Nothing but mud and sand.'

"'Thanks again, *mon ami*. Good night.'

"He made no answer, but turned and strode away, heavily and rapidly, into the darkness.

"I jumped into the chaise, wrapped a rug about my knees, lit a cigar, fixed my eyes steadily on the red light, and drove forward. In another moment,

the wheels went off the shingly slope, and we were going smoothly and noiselessly along the bed of the reach. It was not by any means bad driving. The bottom, though somewhat yielding on the surface, was firm enough an inch below it; and the little pools through which we splashed now and then, or the shells, which grated occasionally under the wheels, offered no obstacle to our progress.

"The air, too, was fresh and salt, with a pleasant perfume of the sea; and there was something exciting, after all, in driving out towards that red light, and remembering that in a few hours more it would be deep water in the channel between.

"All at once my horse neighed, and stood still. I spoke to him, stroked him gently with the whip, and succeeded in urging him forward some few yards farther, when he stopped again, more suddenly than before. It happened that we were at that moment in the midst of a pool deeper and more extensive than any through which I had yet driven; but for this I accounted by calculating that I had already traversed close upon half the distance, and that towards the mid-channel the deposit of water would naturally be somewhat greater. It was this, probably, that alarmed the horse. Whatever it was, however, I could not sit there for his pleasure; and so, finding persuasion useless, I administered three or four sharp cuts of the whip, which had the effect of making him start on again, though with evident reluctance.

"It was strange; but, driving forward thus and steering ever for the red light ahead, I observed

that the isolated pools had within the last few minutes become merged into one shallow sheet of water, extending under the wheels in every direction. In spite of myself, I grew nervous. Knowing that my best course must be to get out of the mid-channel as quickly as possible, I whipped the horse forward all the faster. Still the bottom seemed to decline lower and lower, and the water to rise higher at every yard. I looked eagerly round. The spot whence I had started was no longer distinguishable; but the red light, now larger and nearer than ever, glowed encouragingly through the mist. It was too late to turn back. Cost what it might, I *must* go forward!

"At this moment my horse, flung himself back upon his haunches, planted his fore-legs firmly in the sand, and refused to stir a step farther. Was this fear, or instinct? I dared not ask myself the question. I dared not avow the terrible suspicion that had been gaining upon me during the last few minutes. I gathered up the reins, rose in my seat, and lashed him as I had never lashed him yet since the day I bought him. He resisted, snorted, then dashed on desperately, though the pool by this time rose within an inch of his knees.

"And now, quite suddenly, I became aware that there was a ripple on the surface of the water. From that moment I gave myself up for lost. From that moment I knew that the tide was upon me!

"I am amazed to this hour when I remember how

calmly I took it. Every nerve, every thought, every feeling seemed bound up in the one aim of self-preservation. My only hope lay in the red light; now, apparently, some four hundred yards distant. And still the water rose higher, and the ripple grew stronger, till I felt the chaise undulate, and knew that my poor brute could not keep his legs two minutes longer. My course was taken upon the instant. I knew that both he and I must now swim for our lives; so I took out my pocket-knife, deliberately pulled off my boots, coat, and waistcoat, jumped into the water, cut the horse free, and struck out in the direction of the beacon.

"I was but a poor swimmer at that time, and the current was setting dead against me. Still I kept my head to the red light, made what progress I could, and, though I felt the tide growing stronger every moment, made my mind up to fight it out doggedly to the last. A long time seemed to go by thus; I could not tell how long, for my thoughts, somehow, became confused. Then the water roared about my ears, and the red light came and went before my eyes, and I felt, with a despair beyond all words, that my strength was going! Then came a terrible moment when the beacon disappeared, as if swallowed up suddenly in the darkness — then something huge, black, shapeless, loomed up all at once before me, like a rock, and, fainting as I was, I knew it was a ship, and felt that in another moment I should be sucked under her bows! I shall never forget the horror of the next three or four seconds. I shall never forget how I tried to shout

for help — how my hands glided over the wet hull — how, summoning all my strength for a last effort, I uttered one despairing shriek, felt the waves close over my head, and knew that I was going to the bottom!

"When I recovered consciousness, I found myself lying before a stove in a warm cabin, with a bottle of brandy to my lips, and a crowd of kind faces round me. I soon learnt that I was on board the guard-ship at the mouth of the Aire, a good two miles from land on any side. The sailor on watch had heard my drowning cry, jumped overboard as easily as a Newfoundland dog, and saved me as I rose the second time. I was very ill and exhausted, as you may suppose, and thankful to lie quietly in a hammock all that night, and a greater part of the Christmas-day that followed; and I can tell you that I shared those poor sailors' onion soup and salt beef with more thankfulness than I ever felt at the finest Christmas dinner to which it was my lot to be invited."

"And what about the soldier, sir?" asked the schoolmaster, after the first excitement had subsided, and the stranger had relapsed into silence.

"Ay — what about that black villain François?" echoed the parish clerk.

"I don't know," replied the stranger, abruptly. "I never cared no ask. Either he knew that he was sending me to my death, or he mistook the lights. God forbid that I should accuse an innocent man of wilful murder. Error or no error, however, he cost

me a good chaise and a valuable horse, neither of which did I ever see or hear of again. And now, gentlemen, I'll thank you for another glass of punch."

CHAPTER XIV.

A RAILWAY PANIC.

If this were played upon a stage, now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction. — *Twelfth Night.*

"Do you think I look like a madman?"

I was falling into a train of pleasant thought when these words, uttered in a clear, steady voice by my opposite neighbour, fell upon my ear. I started and looked him in the face. He was a small, sallow, intelligent-looking man, muffled from head to foot in a superb Spanish cloak lined with sables. His tone of voice was perfectly composed and matter-of-fact.

"Indeed, sir," I replied, with some surprise, "no such idea occurred to me."

"But I *am* mad, though!" he retorted, in the same quiet, confidential way.

I was in no humour for levity just then, and, as this was evidently an attempt at practical joking, I made a brief reply to that effect, and looked out of the window. It was an express train, going at the rate of fifty miles an hour; every moment bore me

farther from one who was inexpressibly dear to me; and I felt that I never wished for silence and solitude more than at that moment. The worst of it was that, if this man had made up his mind to talk, I could not help hearing him; and there was no one else for him to address, since we were alone together in the carriage.

"Yes," he continued, "I really am mad. I have just escaped; just escaped — not an hour ago. Shall I tell you how I did it?"

I continued to look out at the landscape flying past, and feigned not to hear him.

"I was not always mad. Oh, dear, no! I do not exactly remember now what it was that drove me to it, but I think it was something connected with Lord Palmerston and the ace of clubs. No — yes — oh, yes; the ace of clubs had certainly something to do with it. However, that is of no consequence now. I had a fine house, and gardens, and horses, and servants, and a wife — aha! such a pretty, gentle, loving little wife! And I loved her, too — nobody knows how I loved her — only I wanted to murder her. I loved her so that I wanted to murder her! Wasn't that a rare joke, eh?"

I began by this time to feel seriously uncomfortable. It was getting slowly dusk, and my companion's face, composed as it was, wore an odd expression that I did not quite like.

"Pray, sir," I said, with affected carelessness, "let us change the subject. If you insist on con-

versing with me, we may as well choose a more agreeable theme."

"Agreeable! Could anything be more agreeable? Well, I will continue. It was a long time before they found it out; I hid it so well. But I knew it well enough; for I used to see faces everywhere, in the furniture — up in the trees — in the bushes; and I knew they could not really be there, and that I was mad at last. For I had always expected it. Ay, ever since I was a boy at school! Somehow they did find it out, though, in spite of all my caution — and I was so cautious — so cautious! They found it out; and, one day, two men came and seized me in my garden — my own garden! and took me to the mad-house! Oh! it was a dreary place that mad-house! They shut me up by myself in a bare, cold room, with never a fire to warm me, though it was bitter winter. The windows were barred across with iron, through which the daylight shone as if through the ribs of a skeleton; and every night — would you believe it? — every night there came a fearful shape and sat there, mocking and mowing at me in the moonbeams. That was a hell, indeed! One night, when I could bear it no longer, I rushed upon the shape and fought and struggled with it, and dashed it up against the hard walls — and then the keepers came and tore me from it, and bound me down with cords upon my bed. I heard them say to one another that I had tried to destroy myself; but I knew better. It was the shape I struggled with —

it was the shape I tried to kill! Only they could not see it. Yet there it still sat, mocking, mocking, mocking, all the long night through; and they watching in my room, and yet so blind that they could not perceive it! I do not know how long this fury of mine lasted; but I think it must have been a weary time. At length, I woke one night from a troubled sleep, and lo! the shape was gone! Ah, then I wept for joy that I was free from it; and I was proud, very proud, for it was gone, and I had conquered it at last! Well, time went on, and I resolved I would escape. How do you suppose I went to work? Why, I pretended to be cured of my madness. Every day the doctor came to see me. But not me alone; I could hear him going to every room all along the corridor; so I knew when he was coming, long before he got to my door. I must deceive him, I knew, as well as everybody else. Oh, it was a hard task; but I did it! The worst of my madness was that I could not help thinking of the oddest things; and when I talked, my tongue would utter them. However, I schooled myself to talk to him. I practised speaking in a calm, low voice — I studied what I should say — I accustomed myself to rise and bow, as if he were entering the room. I did not speak much, but what I said was reasonable — I knew it was reasonable. I used to say that I felt better; that I was tired of the confinement; that I hoped shortly to be permitted to return home; and sometimes (that *was* a clever thought!) I asked anxiously after my

wife. One day she came to see me. You cannot think what an effort her visit cost me. She looked so pale, and timid, and pretty that day — and I forced myself to sit down by her; to say to her all the things I had learnt to say to the doctor; to take her hand in mine; and oh, I longed to kill her so the whole time! But I did not. Ah, no! I even kissed her cheek at parting, though I could have yelled aloud for rage as I bent over her. I don't know whether they still suspected me; but I was not released, for all my pains. So I determined to be ill. I knew the doctor would find me out if I only pretended; therefore, I starved myself. Ha! ha! wasn't that fine? This is how I did it. Every day, instead of eating the food they brought me, I put half of it under a loose board in the floor, and half I left, saying that I felt ill and could eat no more. Each day I left more and more, so that it should seem as if my appetite grew constantly worse. And then I got ill — only I did eat just a morsel now and then to keep me from dying. I suffered fearfully, but still I played my part out, and met the doctor's eye with one as quiet as his own. At last he said that I must be removed to another part of the house, and that I required air, or I should never recover. And then did I not laugh, even though I was so ill, to think how I had outwitted him! My new room was pleasant, and looked over a garden. At the end of the garden was a railway. By this railway, I made up my mind to escape. Aha! what joy to be flying along

behind that engine — flying away, away, and never stopping! I knew well that I must have money to do this. Money! Where, and how could I get money? You will see presently! I did not mean to die, you know, so I ate more now, and got better. It is not every one, let me tell you, that is brave enough to endure starvation as I did. Madmen are no cowards! Well, they used to let me walk in the garden after awhile, but with the keeper always beside me. By-and-by, the doctor began to speak of my release as of a thing that might be in time — and then — then, although the end for which I had been working was almost within my grasp, I felt an irresistible impulse compelling me to escape, and not to wait for their tame deliverance. Day and night, I waited and watched to do it.

"The opportunity came soon. One morning when I was walking with the keeper in the garden, who should come out but the doctor, and what should he do — the senseless fool! — but order the keeper to go in, saying that he would walk with me this time!

"Oh, how my heart leaped and danced within me when he said it! But I kept very still — very still and calm — listening to the man's footsteps on the gravel walk till he was quite gone. I have told you that the railway crossed the bottom of the garden. Well, towards this spot I went (carelessly, as if by accident, you know), and he with me.

"'This beautiful day will do us all good, Mr. B——,' he said to me, in his smooth, deceitful voice.

"He was walking with his hands in his pockets, chinking the gold coins as he went — that gold that I so needed!

"'I hope that you may soon enjoy the summer on your own estates,' he continued.

"He looked so sleek and self-confident and smiling as he spoke then, that I hated him more than ever.

"I did not dare to trust my voice in answer, or suffer my eyes to dwell on him. Could he but have seen *them* for an instant, he would have read my purpose. Just then we reached the extremity of the garden, and stood looking down from the high bank upon the level tram-lines below. There was nothing but a low hedge between us and the road. In an instant I turned upon him.

"'Die!' I shrieked. 'Die! I *am* mad — I *am* mad — and I have sworn to do it!'

"I had the strength of ten in my arms. I closed with him, and dashed his skull against the tree-trunk by which we were standing. Oh, it was a glorious vengeance! I beat the smooth smile out of his face till his own children would not have known him, and then I stamped and danced upon him, and laughed aloud! Suddenly I heard the distant whistle of the train at the village station.

There was not a moment to be lost! I tore the watch from his pocket, and I took the purse with the gold! and then, ha! ha! ha! I flung the body over upon the lines, and the train came swiftly on and on, and crushed him as he lay! Was not that a revenge, and would any but a madman have thought of it? Tell me that! Tell me that!"

I was so frozen with horror that I sat as if petrified, and could not utter a word.

"Now you want to know how I came here," continued the maniac more quietly, after a momentary pause. "Well, he had this cloak on before the struggle. I wrapped it round me, and went straight through the gardens, and out of the gate, past his very lodge-keeper; and, thanks to the high collar, none of them knew me — for we were much of a height, the doctor and I. Once out of sight of the house — the dreary, cruel house! — I seemed as if I had wings upon my feet, I fled away so fast. The people in the streets of the town stared at me; but what did that matter? I did not care for their staring. I mingled with the crowd at the station and paid my fare like the rest, with — ha! ha! — with the doctor's money! But there was blood on the gold. I tried to rub it off, but I could not. It came again as fast as I removed it, and I thought they would see it when I put the money down. They did not, though; and here I am free — free! Now, answer me, do you believe that I'm a madman?"

He put his face quite close to mine as he said this, and his voice passed from its former level tone to a quick, harsh, exulting calibre that thrilled me with dismay. It was now almost dark, too, and his eyes shone with a cold, unnatural lustre like the phosphorescent light which is thrown off from fish in a state of putrefaction. It was clear that I must make some reply. Even while I hesitated, he repeated the question, and this time more impatiently.

"Well, yes," I said at last, with quivering lips; "I — I think you must be mad."

"I'll prove it to you," he whispered, bending still closer to me. "How do you think I'll prove it now?"

I shook my head.

"I cannot tell," I said, faintly.

"By murdering you as I murdered him! What! did you think I would let you live, after having told you all about it? Live to betray me, and take me back to the . . . No, no! madmen are brave — madmen are cunning — madmen are strong!"

I saw that force could avail me nothing here. In great emergencies I always retain my presence of mind. This time it did not fail me, and I was cool in an instant.

"Stop," I said calmly, fixing my eyes full upon him. "You have not yet told me all. If you are determined to have my life, it is only fair that you should finish your story first."

"That's true," said the madman, with some appearance of curiosity. "What have I left out?"

"You have not explained to me about Lord Palmerston and the ace of clubs."

"I didn't think you'd care to hear that," said he, doubtfully.

"I'd rather hear that than all the rest."

The lamp now cast a sickly glare through the carriage; and it was so dark that nothing of the country was visible beyond the windows. I knew we must be within a short distance of the London terminus. If I could only divert his attention for a little while longer, I was saved! I determined to keep him in conversation if possible.

"Lord Palmerston began it, you must know," he continued, "and the ace of clubs finished it."

"Did you know Lord Palmerston?" I asked.

He looked at me vacantly, as if he did not comprehend my question. I repeated it.

"Know him? I bred and trained him!"

"Oh! indeed?" I said. "Pray proceed."

"I bred and trained him on my own estates. I was as fond of him as I could have been of a child — ay, and fonder too; for if I had had a child, I must have wrung its neck — I feel I must!"

Here he fixed his eyes on me again, and his fingers worked nervously together, as if longing to be at my throat.

"But about Lord Palmerston?" said I.

His face resumed the old expression, and a gloomy shade seemed to pass over it.

"Ah!" said he, moodily, "that was a dreadful disappointment, wasn't it?"

"You have not told me yet," I said. "Did his lordship treat you ill?"

"He lost! he lost! I had backed him with half my fortune, and he lost! But, hark you!" and he clutched me by the arm as he said it, "he was drugged — I know he was drugged the night before!"

"Then Lord Palmerston was a horse!" I exclaimed.

"Of course he was. I told you so at first. You don't pay attention — you're not interested."

"Indeed, I am — deeply," I replied, eagerly. "Pray, go on."

We *must* be in now before five minutes were past — this I was assured of. Five minutes! — long enough to die!

"That is all," replied he, with a suspicious stare. "He lost, and I lost. That's the end of it."

"But what has this to do with the ace of clubs?"

"The ace of clubs!" said he, fiercely. "What's that to you?"

"You promised to tell me, you know; and I should like to hear it," I replied, in a conciliating

tone. "You have not told me half yet. Do tell me about the ace of clubs."

"I was desperate, you see," said the maniac. "I was desperate after Palmerston knocked up. I had always avoided play till then, but somehow I fell into it when I saw the men at the club playing night after night, winning and losing — winning and losing! I often saw as much gold change hands on a single card as would have covered all my losses on the turf; and then I could not resist it."

"So you played too?"

"So I played too. For a whole week I won incessantly. Aha! the red gold and the rustling notes that I took home every night for that week! I won more, three times more, than I had lost by the race! And then came the turn of the luck."

"You lost?"

"All that I had gained, in one night! But I was not satisfied: I went on again the next day, and lost, and lost, and lost, till everything I had on earth was gone. Nay, all I had on earth was not enough to pay it! But I know how it was. That old man I played with was the Fiend. I knew he was the Fiend. I saw it in his eyes."

He paused.

The whistle of the guard rang shrilly through the air, and the pace of the train slackened. He listened — he knew that we were coming in — he turned suddenly towards me.

"But what about the ace of clubs?" I urged, riedly. "Did the old man turn it up?"

"Will you betray me if I tell you?"

"Never," I said, earnestly.

"Listen, then. I hid it in my sleeve; for I was perate. I staked thousands on the chance of ing it. They all stood round, betting how it ld turn up; the old man — curse him! — smiled, let me do it. But he had seen me — he had me! And when I cut the ace of clubs, he d up and called me 'Thief!'"

A bright flash of light streamed in at the win- vs — the train stopped. Thank God! we were ived! The madman shrunk back at the sight of lamps, and the crowd of faces beyond. I leaned r the door, and with fingers that refused to do ir work, felt eagerly for the handle.

"What is the matter? What is this?" he said, idly.

"Help!" I shrieked, springing out upon the tform among the tide of passengers. "Help! this n is mad!"

There were two men standing by the barrier iously scrutinizing each face as it passed by. ey both turned as I spoke, and one came to me.

"Where is he, sir?" said he, respectfully. "We're iting for him. It's been telegraphed along the e that he's murdered some one down at H—, and 's awful dangerous."

He had ventured out by this time, and was standing irresolutely beside the carriage door, not knowing where to turn.

As for me, I could only point to him, for the power of speech was gone; and just as they had captured him, I fell senseless to the ground.

END OF VOL. I.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

July 1876.

Tauchnitz Edition.

Latest Volumes:

Ersilia by the Author of "My Little Lady," 2 vols.
A Winter Story by Frances Mary Peard, 1 vol.
Queen Mary by Alfred Tennyson, 1 vol.
The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay by His N
George Otto Trevelyan, 4 vols. (with portrait)
Ben Milner's Wooing by Holme Lee, 1 vol.
Little Women by Louisa M. Alcott, 2 vols.
Dear Lady Disdain by Justin McCarthy, 2 vols.
Lady Silverdale's Sweetheart by William Black, 1 vo
In a Winter City by Ouida, 1 vol.
Gabriel Conroy by Bret Harte, 2 vols.
Adam Grainger by Mrs. Henry Wood, 1 vol.
A Lucky Disappointment by Florence Marryat, 1 vo
Dead Men's Shoes by M. E. Braddon, 2 vols.
The Atonement of Leam Dundas by E. Lynn Linton, 2
The Hand of Ethelberta by Thomas Hardy, 2 vols.

EACH VOLUME SOLD SEPARATELY.

COLLECTION
OF
RITISH AUTHORS
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 786.

S CAREW BY AMELIA B. EDWARDS

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. 2.

IPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

PARIS: C. REINWALD, 15, RUE DES SAINTS PÈRES.

This Collection
ected with copyright for Continental circulation, but all
ers are earnestly requested not to introduce the volumes
into England or into any British Colony.

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 786.

MISS CAREW BY AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

MISS CAREW.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY," ETC.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

2.113.48.40

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
THE BEQUEST OF
THEODORE JEWETT EASTMAN
1931

MISS CAREW.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY," ETC.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

gave me a cordial welcome. Our liking was mutual, and ripened speedily to friendship. He took me everywhere; initiated me into all those phases of Paris life known only to the native resident; and, in fact, gave me an insight into men and manners which, as a stranger, I could not otherwise have acquired.

It was, I think, about the middle of the month of October when I arrived in Paris. By the time that the Carnival season approached, I was familiar with all parts of the capital, and intimate with Duhamel. I had long been anticipating the advent of that giddy festival; and my friend promised to take me to many places of entertainment, of which the uninstructed traveller finds no mention in the pages of Galignani.

We bought our tickets for the first grand Bal Masqué at the Opera full three weeks before-hand; and I devoted myself, with boyish vanity, to the invention of a gorgeous and fantastic domino, which I flattered myself should attract universal attention wherever I made my appearance. Even the *costumier* under whose direction it was to be made up, confessed that my design was altogether original.

I had for some time observed that Maurice was less cheerful than when I first knew him. He no longer shared my joyous anticipations of fun and frolic to come. He grew daily more pale and dejected, and sighed when I spoke of the Bal de l'Opéra. At length there came an evening when his melancholy was so obvious that I felt I might venture to observe it. It was the evening of the

MISS CAREW.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREY DOMINO.

I have seen the day that I have worn a visor.
Romeo and Juliet.

Maurice Duhamel was my best friend and constant companion in those days of which I am about to tell you. He lives now at Marseilles, and I in London; but distance makes no difference to a friendship like ours. We write to each other once in every month; and were we to meet again face to face and hand to hand to-morrow, it would be with us as though we had parted but yesterday.

I made his friendship in Paris. Napoleon was then First Consul, and the English thronged over the Channel by hundreds to his civic court — I amongst the rest. I was young — tolerably rich — fond of fun, variety, and adventure. I aspired moreover to the honours of authorship. That is to say, I had written a tragedy which was hissed, and a novel that fell still-born from the press. I had not been in Paris many days before I waited on Maurice Duhamel with a letter of introduction. He

thinly scattered among the foot passengers, and several had made their appearance in the open carriages. Three o'clock — still no domino! I wrote an urgent letter, and sent it by one of the public messengers. M. Giroux returned a polite reply, stating that the extreme pressure of business had unavoidably retarded the completion of Mr. Hamilton's costume, but Mr. Hamilton might rely upon its arrival in time for the Bal Masqué in the evening.

Here was a provoking circumstance! I had ordered an open carriage for that afternoon, in which to display my domino along the Boulevards, and now — to be compelled to wait till evening .... it was too bad! I paced up and down the apartment in a fury of disappointment.

The carriage came — I sent it away again; and at five o'clock strolled into a neighbouring restaurant to while away the hours that yet intervened. At seven I returned. The domino had not yet arrived.

Eight o'clock came and passed away, and neither my friend nor my domino made their appearance. Nine — half-past — a quarter to ten.

I was in despair. Could Maurice be ill? — must I go alone to the Ball, and without my domino? I was lying on the sofa, counting the weary minutes, when a heavy step came slowly up the stairs; the door opened; and a man with a small box put his head into the room.

"Monsieur Hamilton, from M. Giroux."

I snatched it from his hands with undisguised

day preceding the Carnival, and we were taking coffee in my apartments.

"Maurice," I said, "you are not happy. "You have some secret trouble."

He shook his head.

"Pshaw," he said, "it is nothing — the effect of study — of late hours — of *ennui!*"

But I was not thus to be put off.

"I know there is something more than this," I said, earnestly. "Surely, Maurice, I have some claim to your confidence?"

"*Eh bien!*" he said, as a faint flush passed over his face. "I am in — in love, then. In love — unhappy — plunged in doubt — worried by suspense and — and now you know all!"

I did not know all, nor half; but I could elicit nothing farther from him; and shortly afterwards he hurried away, promising to call for me the next evening at eight o'clock, that we might go together to the Opera.

The next day came at last, and the Carnival began. My elegant domino, the cherished offspring of my invention, was to have been sent home long since, and had not yet arrived. I had scarcely any appetite for breakfast, and could not keep my attention fixed for five minutes together on the columns of the *Journal des Débats*. My windows looked out upon the Boulevard des Capucines. There was an unusual gaiety and bustle pervading that gayest of thoroughfares, but as yet I had seen no masks, and this somewhat consoled me for the delay of my domino. One o'clock came; a few masks were now

deurs without number. Here was all the wealth, the wit, the fashion of Paris; and here was poor Frederick Hamilton in that detestable grey serge domino!

I saw no one so meanly dressed as myself — I was pursued with jeers and impertinent questions. One complimented me upon my taste in fancy costume; another asked the address of my *costumier;* a third saluted me as "the millionnaire in the serge domino."

In the midst of my distress, I suddenly felt a light touch upon my shoulder, and an arm slipped through mine.

I turned, and saw a lady in the dress of a Carmelite nun, with a mask upon her face, and the hood of her robe drawn closely over her head.

"How late you are!" she said hurriedly, "I have been expecting you for the last two hours."

"*Ma foi, Madame,*" I replied, in the best French I could muster. "I feel particularly flattered by your anxiety."

"Alas, monsieur," said the lady impatiently, "why this levity? Surely the moment is too serious for jesting!"

"Madame," I said laughing, "your penetration is surprising. I really have yet to discover the solemnity of a masked ball."

"Pray cease this acting," said the lady, angrily, "and give me the reply for which I have dared to come here alone this evening. The moment is arrived when you must decide — nay, this very night you may be called upon to act. A delay, if only of a few hours — a refusal at the last extremity, when

it would be too late to secure another agent — would be sufficient to ensure the success of our cause! Say, monsieur, is it Yes or No?"

I was silent with amazement. The lady continued: —

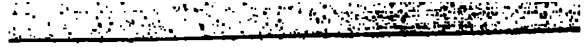
"If it be money that you want, you shall have it. We will double the sum the Marquis and his advisers pay you. If it be position, you know that my husband has sufficient influence to advance you. Speak, monsieur, speak — may we rely upon you to-night, if to-night you should be called upon?"

"I fear, Madame," said I, "that you are addressing me under a wrong impression. I have not the honour of knowing you, and I do not comprehend one word of what you say."

"Are you, then, so unfeeling?" exclaimed my companion. "Can you really treat thus lightly so painful a subject? If you assume this tone, this ignorance, this foreign accent, merely to turn my entreaties into jest, and to steel your heart the more effectually against the appeals of helpless sorrow, it is ill-timed, monsieur — ill-timed and ungenerous. Say at once that you will not assist us — that you are without pity; but, for mercy's sake, cease this cruel mockery!"

"Indeed, madame," I began, "you are mistaken in me . . . ."

"On the contrary, monsieur," she replied, bitterly, withdrawing her hand from my arm, to which she had been clinging in the eagerness of her appeal — "on the contrary, I but find you what I *had* expected — cold, heartless, unprincipled. For shame, mon-



MISS CAREW.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY," ETC.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

2.'173.48.40

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
THE BEQUEST OF
THEODORE JEWETT EASTMAN
1931

[ISS CAREW.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY," ETC.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

gave me a cordial welcome. Our liking was mutual, and ripened speedily to friendship. He took me everywhere; initiated me into all those phases of Paris life known only to the native resident; and, in fact, gave me an insight into men and manners which, as a stranger, I could not otherwise have acquired.

It was, I think, about the middle of the month of October when I arrived in Paris. By the time that the Carnival season approached, I was familiar with all parts of the capital, and intimate with Duhamel. I had long been anticipating the advent of that giddy festival; and my friend promised to take me to many places of entertainment, of which the uninstructed traveller finds no mention in the pages of Galignani.

We bought our tickets for the first grand Bal Masqué at the Opera full three weeks before-hand; and I devoted myself, with boyish vanity, to the invention of a gorgeous and fantastic domino, which I flattered myself should attract universal attention wherever I made my appearance. Even the *costumier* under whose direction it was to be made up, confessed that my design was altogether original.

I had for some time observed that Maurice was less cheerful than when I first knew him. He no longer shared my joyous anticipations of fun and frolic to come. He grew daily more pale and dejected, and sighed when I spoke of the Bal de l'Opéra. At length there came an evening when his melancholy was so obvious that I felt I might venture to observe it. It was the evening of the

MISS CAREW.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREY DOMINO.

I have seen the day that I have worn a visor.
Romeo and Juliet.

Maurice Duhamel was my best friend and constant companion in those days of which I am about to tell you. He lives now at Marseilles, and I in London; but distance makes no difference to a friendship like ours. We write to each other once in every month; and were we to meet again face to face and hand to hand to-morrow, it would be with us as though we had parted but yesterday.

I made his friendship in Paris. Napoleon was then First Consul, and the English thronged over the Channel by hundreds to his civic court — I amongst the rest. I was young — tolerably rich — fond of fun, variety, and adventure. I aspired moreover to the honours of authorship. That is to say, I had written a tragedy which was hissed, and a novel that fell still-born from the press. I had not been in Paris many days before I waited on Maurice Duhamel with a letter of introduction. He

thinly scattered among the foot passengers, and several had made their appearance in the open carriages. Three o'clock — still no domino! I wrote an urgent letter, and sent it by one of the public messengers. M. Giroux returned a polite reply, stating that the extreme pressure of business had unavoidably retarded the completion of Mr. Hamilton's costume, but Mr. Hamilton might rely upon its arrival in time for the Bal Masqué in the evening.

Here was a provoking circumstance! I had ordered an open carriage for that afternoon, in which to display my domino along the Boulevards, and now — to be compelled to wait till evening .... it was too bad! I paced up and down the apartment in a fury of disappointment.

The carriage came — I sent it away again; and at five o'clock strolled into a neighbouring restaurant to while away the hours that yet intervened. At seven I returned. The domino had not yet arrived.

Eight o'clock came and passed away, and neither my friend nor my domino made their appearance. Nine — half-past — a quarter to ten.

I was in despair. Could Maurice be ill? — must I go alone to the Ball, and without my domino? I was lying on the sofa, counting the weary minutes, when a heavy step came slowly up the stairs; the door opened; and a man with a small box put his head into the room.

"Monsieur Hamilton, from M. Giroux."

I snatched it from his hands with undisguised

delight, and precipitated myself into my dressing-room. With hasty fingers I strove to undo the cord, but I only drew it into a hard knot. I looked for my penknife, and could not find it. In short, several minutes had elapsed before I succeeded in opening the box and in drawing forth — oh heavens! not my beautiful, my unique, my elegant domino, but a horrible, ill-favoured garment, made of coarse grey serge, and trimmed with black ribbon.

I flew to the door, and down the stairs; but the man was already out of sight. What I said or did I cannot tell, but I remember finding myself on the point of tearing the domino to pieces, and being suddenly checked by the reflection that if I did so I should have nothing else to take its place! A bill lay folded at the bottom of the box. It ran thus:

"M. l'Avocat Du Bois, à H. Giroux.
"1 Costume de Bal . . . . 25 francs."

"M. l'Avocat Du Bois!" I said aloud. "Certainly I have heard the name! Yes — I remember: — he lives in the Rue de Richelieu; has a large practice, and the reputation of a miser! Well, he might give a better price for his domino! The deuce! perhaps he has mine, and will be flourishing to-night in borrowed plumes at some of the soirées . . . . Ah, if I only meet him at the Opera!"

The theatre was crowded; and the whole scene was one blaze of lights and revelry.

Here were Albanians, Cossacks, Pierrots, Spanish noblemen, Italian flower-girls, Greeks, Sultanas, Crusaders, Postilions, Demons, Turks and Debar-

thinly scattered among the foot passengers, and several had made their appearance in the open carriages. Three o'clock — still no domino! I wrote an urgent letter, and sent it by one of the public messengers. M. Giroux returned a polite reply, stating that the extreme pressure of business had unavoidably retarded the completion of Mr. Hamilton's costume, but Mr. Hamilton might rely upon its arrival in time for the Bal Masqué in the evening.

Here was a provoking circumstance! I had ordered an open carriage for that afternoon, in which to display my domino along the Boulevards, and now — to be compelled to wait till evening .... it was too bad! I paced up and down the apartment in a fury of disappointment.

The carriage came — I sent it away again; and at five o'clock strolled into a neighbouring restaurant to while away the hours that yet intervened. At seven I returned. The domino had not yet arrived.

Eight o'clock came and passed away, and neither my friend nor my domino made their appearance. Nine — half-past — a quarter to ten.

I was in despair. Could Maurice be ill? — must I go alone to the Ball, and without my domino? I was lying on the sofa, counting the weary minutes, when a heavy step came slowly up the stairs; the door opened; and a man with a small box put his head into the room.

"Monsieur Hamilton, from M. Giroux."

I snatched it from his hands with undisguised

delight, and precipitated myself into my dressing-room. With hasty fingers I strove to undo the cord, but I only drew it into a hard knot. I looked for my penknife, and could not find it. In short, several minutes had elapsed before I succeeded in opening the box and in drawing forth — oh heavens! not my beautiful, my unique, my elegant domino, but a horrible, ill-favoured garment, made of coarse grey serge, and trimmed with black ribbon.

I flew to the door, and down the stairs; but the man was already out of sight. What I said or did I cannot tell, but I remember finding myself on the point of tearing the domino to pieces, and being suddenly checked by the reflection that if I did so I should have nothing else to take its place! A bill lay folded at the bottom of the box. It ran thus:

"M. l'Avocat Du Bois, à H. Giroux.
"1 Costume de Bal . . . . . 25 francs."

"M. l'Avocat Du Bois!" I said aloud. "Certainly I have heard the name! Yes — I remember: — he lives in the Rue de Richelieu; has a large practice, and the reputation of a miser! Well, he might give a better price for his domino! The deuce! perhaps he has mine, and will be flourishing to-night in borrowed plumes at some of the soirées . . . . Ah, if I only meet him at the Opera!"

The theatre was crowded; and the whole scene was one blaze of lights and revelry.

Here were Albanians, Cossacks, Pierrots, Spanish noblemen, Italian flower-girls, Greeks, Sultanas, Crusaders, Postilions, Demons, Turks and Debar-

deurs without number. Here was all the wealth, the wit, the fashion of Paris; and here was poor Frederick Hamilton in that detestable grey serge domino!

I saw no one so meanly dressed as myself — I was pursued with jeers and impertinent questions. One complimented me upon my taste in fancy costume; another asked the address of my *costumier;* a third saluted me as "the millionnaire in the serge domino."

In the midst of my distress, I suddenly felt a light touch upon my shoulder, and an arm slipped through mine.

I turned, and saw a lady in the dress of a Carmelite nun, with a mask upon her face, and the hood of her robe drawn closely over her head.

"How late you are!" she said hurriedly, "I have been expecting you for the last two hours."

"*Ma foi, Madame*," I replied, in the best French I could muster. "I feel particularly flattered by your anxiety."

"Alas, monsieur," said the lady impatiently, "why this levity? Surely the moment is too serious for jesting!"

"Madame," I said laughing, "your penetration is surprising. I really have yet to discover the solemnity of a masked ball."

"Pray cease this acting," said the lady, angrily, "and give me the reply for which I have dared to come here alone this evening. The moment is arrived when you must decide — nay, this very night you may be called upon to act. A delay, if only of a few hours — a refusal at the last extremity, when

it would be too late to secure another agent — would be sufficient to ensure the success of our cause! Say, monsieur, is it Yes or No?"

I was silent with amazement. The lady continued: —

"If it be money that you want, you shall have it. We will double the sum the Marquis and his advisers pay you. If it be position, you know that my husband has sufficient influence to advance you. Speak, monsieur, speak — may we rely upon you to-night, if to-night you should be called upon?"

"I fear, Madame," said I, "that you are addressing me under a wrong impression. I have not the honour of knowing you, and I do not comprehend one word of what you say."

"Are you, then, so unfeeling?" exclaimed my companion. "Can you really treat thus lightly so painful a subject? If you assume this tone, this ignorance, this foreign accent, merely to turn my entreaties into jest, and to steel your heart the more effectually against the appeals of helpless sorrow, it is ill-timed, monsieur — ill-timed and ungenerous. Say at once that you will not assist us — that you are without pity; but, for mercy's sake, cease this cruel mockery!"

"Indeed, madame," I began, "you are mistaken in me . . . ."

"On the contrary, monsieur," she replied, bitterly, withdrawing her hand from my arm, to which she had been clinging in the eagerness of her appeal — "on the contrary, I but find you what I *had* expected — cold, heartless, unprincipled. For shame, mon-

sieur, thus to suffer the persecution of an innocent girl!"

"Madame, I assure you, if you will but . . . ."

"Enough, monsieur — you refuse. Alas! our trust, now, must be in Heaven alone!"

With these words she turned hastily away, and in an instant I lost sight of her amid the throng. I was greatly surprised by what I had heard.

"Bravo!" I said to myself. "Here is a capital incident on which to weave a story! I shall get 'ideas' out of this Carnival!"

So I pushed my way on through the crowd of masks, in search of new adventures.

All at once a man dressed as a friar darted from behind a column, and grasped me roughly by the arm.

"It is well, monsieur," he said, in a hoarse voice. "I have been looking for you. I have just met Madame la Baronne, and I know all. You refuse — you are inflexible! Very well — but I will have satisfaction, monsieur: satisfaction *à l'outrance!* You shall hear from me!"

And before I could utter a syllable he had plunged into the crowd and was gone. Singular and unaccountable! It seemed to me that I had recognised the voice and costume of Maurice Duhamel!

Appealed to by an unknown lady, challenged by my friend! The plot thickened. The affair promised to furnish me with a comedy at the very least! I resolved that, if accosted again, I would no longer strive to undeceive those who might address me, but merge my identity in that of the absent unknown,

and follow the adventure to an end. One thing was evident, that M. l'Avocat Du Bois was directly or indirectly concerned in the business, and that for all this perplexity I was indebted to the grey serge domino. Being prepared by this train of reasoning, and the resolution I had taken, I was not so much surprised when, somewhat later in the evening, I found myself an object of especial attention to two men in plain black dominoes. They passed and repassed me once or twice, and I heard one of them say, in a low voice,

"Are you sure that is he?"

"Certain," replied the other; "do you not see the white cross on his shoulder?"

Involuntarily I turned my head, and there, sure enough, was a small white cross, let into the right shoulder of the domino. I had not observed this before.

The two men immediately advanced, and the last speaker, bending his head towards me, and whispering in a quick, cautious voice, said: —

"We are here seeking you, monsieur. The moment is at hand, and there is no time to be lost. He cannot last many hours longer, and you must accompany us directly. Are you ready?"

This time I was determined not to discover myself; so I bowed silently, and motioned to them to lead the way. Whether they feared that even at the last I might be disposed to give them the slip I know not, but they passed their arms through mine, one at each side, and so pressed through the crowd and on towards the door. A carriage waited at the

corner of the street, into which they bade me mount. They then seated themselves opposite; the servant slammed the door; and we drove away almost at a gallop.

Surely I had seen the figure of a friar glide after us through the vestibule of the opera-house, and surely I heard the sound of other wheels behind!

The night was very dark, and all the shops were closed; but I recognised several of the leading thoroughfares — the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, the Barrière du Roule, the Avenue of Neuilly! Were we, then, bound for the country? I will not deny that I began to feel somewhat uneasy on finding myself alone with these men, so still, masked, and silent. Despite all my anxiety for adventure, I wished myself back again in the Salle de l'Opéra.

On we went. The Avenue was deserted, and scarcely a chariot passed us on the way.

We stopped at last before a small side door that opened upon the road from the midst of a long high wall. One of my conductors leaped out. The door yielded to his touch, and I followed him into what appeared by that dim light to be a spacious garden surrounding a stately mansion. The carriage drove away; the door was closed behind me; and we passed into the house.

I found myself in a large hall floored with polished marble, and richly decorated. A broad staircase led to the upper apartments, at the foot of which a servant in livery was waiting.

"What news?" asked one of the dominoes, re-

moving his vizor, and disclosing a pale, careworn face, lit by a pair of eager black eyes.

The servant shook his head.

"M. le Marquis is now speechless," he said, "and M. le Medicin says that he can scarcely live an hour."

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried the domino, striking his hands impatiently together, "how sudden! He seemed as if he would last at least till to-morrow! Quick, quick! Now, monsieur, follow me. Thanks be to the blessed Virgin, the deed is already drawn up!"

He strode rapidly up before me. In doing so, the hood of his domino fell back, and I saw the shaven tonsure of a Roman Catholic priest.

We traversed a suite of reception-rooms by the light of a small lamp which he carried in his hand. Seen by that dim light, they appeared as if furnished with unwonted magnificence. Our feet sank deep at every step into the soft carpets of Turkey, and gave forth no sound. A heavy atmosphere, as of death, hung around us. The place was all hushed, dark, melancholy.

We reached a doorway curtained with silken hangings. The priest paused, and turned towards me.

"Ten thousand francs if we succeed, monsieur," he whispered between his teeth. "Was not that our agreement?"

I nodded. The second domino removed his mask. He likewise was a priest.

They whispered together, and the first speaker once more addressed me: —

2.173.48.40

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
THE BEQUEST OF
THEODORE JEWETT EASTMAN
1931

"This is it," he said. "Read it once through, quickly — quickly! See that there is no flaw or quibble to be turned against us. Make all safe, for he is going fast."

I glanced towards the bed, and saw the wreck of what had once been a man of vast proportions and noble features. His eyes were closed; he breathed with difficulty; and save an occasional movement of the head, he seemed unconscious of all around him. The three priests surrounded the bed; and one of them, bending low, spoke in a voice inaudible to the rest. The patient moved his hand feebly, as if in reply.

"M. le Marquis desires to make the final arrangements for his daughter, and to receive the extreme unction in private," said the priest, turning to the physician, who yet retained his place beside the patient. "Monsieur will oblige us by retiring. His services, alas! can be of no further avail."

The physician rose. He looked from one to another, and glanced suspiciously at the documents on the table.

"M. l'Avocat will retire with me?" he asked.

"M. l'Avocat has but just arrived," said the priest, opening the door with an air of polite authority, "and his presence is indispensable."

The physician somewhat lingeringly and reluctantly withdrew. The young girl still sat pale and motionless as ever; the priests gathered round the bed; and I began hastily glancing over the contents of the deed.

Its purport was to the effect that "M. le Marquis

de Saint Roch, feeling the near approach of death, and being humbly and devoutly sensible of the importance of heavenly things, the sanctity and purity of the Roman Catholic Church, the immense benefit conferred by its religious institutions upon the people of all Roman Catholic nations, and the necessity of arming the teachers of the true faith against the encroachments and enmity of heritics and controversialists, had, after mature and deliberate consideration, resolved upon bequeathing the whole of his temporal possessions, including his personal property, houses, plate, carriages, jewels, and estates, to the holy and enlightened Society of the Order of Jesus; reserving only the sum of 50,000 francs for the dowry of Mademoiselle Gabrielle, his daughter, whom he entrusted to the guardianship of the Reverend Fathers Eustache and Ambroise, directing that she should be placed by them in the convent of Les Dames Carmelites, Rue Vaugirard, Paris, and there take the veil."

What should I do? The priests were exhorting the dying man, and the young girl never moved.

"Is all ready?" asked the Jesuit.

I made an affirmative sign.

"My son," said he, "thou must suffer thyself to be raised for a moment. The holy document needs thy signature. Courage! the Blessed Virgin herself looks down upon thy work, and a heavenly reward awaits thee!"

He opened his eyes for the first time since I had entered the room, and an expression of religious enthusiasm lighted his pale countenance. The priests

lifted him in their arms, and placed the pen in his trembling fingers.

The young girl rose suddenly, and fell on her knees beside the bed.

"Oh! no, father! no — have pity!" she cried, with clasped, imploring hands — "not the convent, father! not the convent — anything but that!"

"Silence, daughter!" said the Jesuit, sternly. "Thy father is dying! Disturb not his soul with the prayers of thy selfish humanity."

The flush passed away from the brow of the patient, and was succeeded by a pallor more ghastly than before.

"I will speak!" sobbed Gabrielle — "I will be heard! Father! father! spare me for my mother's sake!"

There was a noise in the next room, a sudden battering upon the oaken door, and a man's voice crying loudly, "Let me in! It is I — it is Maurice; Oh! Gabrielle, let me in!"

She seized her father's hand, and covered it with tears.

"Listen, father, listen!" she cried. "It is he — I love him! I love him!"

The dying man raised his head; the cold dews stood upon his forehead; he moved his lips convulsively, but he could articulate no sound. He flung the pen from him.

The Jesuit forced it back into his hand.

"My son," said he, "remember your vow. You have gone too far to defraud the Church of her dues! Will you die a sinner, a rebel, a heretic?

Must I refuse you the last consolations of religion? Shall no masses be said for your repose — no saints intercede for your forgiveness? Must I excommunicate your very memory after death?"

The wretched man quailed before these awful words.

"Back, daughter," said the priest, grasping Gabrielle by the arm, and thrusting her forcibly on one side; "speak to him no more!"

The noise in the outer chamber had ceased. The marquis was seized with a convulsive trembling.

"Quick! the paper!" cried the Jesuit.

I crossed rapidly to the bed, and held the document for him to sign. The stiffening fingers almost refused their office, and he had scarce scrawled his name, when the hand fell heavily, and the last terrible struggle began.

The priests fell upon their knees, and chanted the prayers for the dying; while Gabrielle, terrified and weeping, threw herself before a crucifix that hung beside the bed.

It was soon over. They drew the sheet across his face, and one of them opened the door. There were two persons outside — a lady and a young man. The lady wore the robe of a Carmelite over her rich evening dress, and carried a black visor in her hand. In the young man I recognized Maurice Duhamel. He no longer wore the disguise of a friar. He was deathly pale, and the traces of tears were upon his cheek. They flew to Gabrielle. The lady took her in her arms, and Maurice bent sadly over her.

"My poor child," said the former, "we have heard all. But be comforted; everything may not yet be lost. I will appeal to the law — to the First Consul himself; and if our earthly judges be against us, there is yet a Higher Tribunal, by which all virtue is recompensed, and all crime punished!"

Maurice turned to me in a sudden access of fury.

"And you, sir — you!" he cried, "you who might have averted this calamity, what have you to say to this poor girl? Do you not rejoice in the sight of the misery you have aided to inflict upon us?"

"Silence!" said the priest, with an air of commanding dignity; "this is no place for such expressions. Let the room be cleared, and leave us to pray for the soul of the departed. Young man, respect the presence of the dead."

He turned towards the lady.

"Madame la Baronne," he said, "your brother has died in the fulfilment of a sacred duty. I beseech you retire to your apartments, and make it your task to soothe the anguish of your niece, till we, her guardians, can relieve you of that office, by placing her under the protecting care of Les Dames Carmelites."

I thought it now time to interfere. I removed my mask. An exclamation of surprise burst from the lips of all present. The Jesuits turned pale, and drew back.

"Stop," I said, eagerly, "let us not be too hasty. Perhaps, after all, there may be no occasion for

Mademoiselle de Saint Roch to enter the society of Les Dames Carmelites!" And I pointed to the deed which lay beside me on the table.

The Jesuit sprang forward, uttered a hoarse cry, and dropped into a chair.

I had substituted the old will for the deed of gift — the old will, by which Gabrielle was left sole heiress to her father's wealth; free to live, to marry, to be happy! She threw herself on her knees before me; while Maurice, dumb, flushed, and trembling, supported himself against the mantelpiece.

"Dread the vengeance of the Church for this, Monsieur!" said the Jesuit, rising and moving towards the door.

I smiled, and shook my head.

"I am an Englishman," I said. "You dare not touch me. I might, if I chose, tell something of the bribe of ten thousand francs offered for aid in extorting money from a dying man!"

"You are our saviour!" murmured Gabrielle, as I raised and led her to a seat.

Maurice came to me with extended hands.

"And is it to you, *mon ami*, that we are indebted for this deliverance?" he cried passionately. "Is it to you?"

"By no means," I replied, pointing to my dress, and to the visor, lying on the floor — "you have to thank the Grey Domino!"

CHAPTER II.

CAIN.

I HAD already made some way in my profession, when I went over to France about sixteen years ago, to study under Paul Delaroche. The great master was absent from Paris at the time of my arrival, and for some weeks I wandered from church to church, from gallery to gallery, dreaming, hoping, worshipping. I spent long days in the Louvre. To me, the place was sacred; and I well remember how I often stood gazing into the golden glooms of a Rembrandt, or the airy distances of a Claude, till tears of boyish enthusiasm shut away the pictures from my sight.

While I was yet revelling in this delicious liberty, I visited the Luxembourg gallery for the first time. It was on a superb morning in June. There had been a shower, and the rain-drops were yet glittering on the acacias. The clouds had cleared off; white statues gleamed here and there among the trees; and the great glass dome of the Observatoire looked all glad and golden in the sunshine.

I turned away reluctantly from the brilliant gardens, and passed through the little side-door leading to the upper rooms of the palace. I was devoted, at this time, to the elder schools of art,

and felt but little interest in the works of my contemporaries; so I strolled on listlessly from room to room, pausing now and then before a Flandrin, or a Paul Delaroche; but caring little for the collection as a whole.

At last, in the obscurest corner of a small, ill-lighted room, I came upon a picture that rivetted my attention the moment I beheld it. The subject was "Cain after the murder of Abel;" the artist's name, Camille Prévost.

Never, while I live, shall I forget the thrill with which I first beheld that fearful painting; never that ghastly landscape, and that still more ghastly face! The murderer stood on a bleak precipice, his head half-turned, as if looking over his shoulder towards the spectator. The red sun was setting behind a gloomy forest on the far horizon. The sky and stagnant ocean were bathed in a copper-coloured glow. A snake glided through a foreground of loathsome weeds; and a distant vulture hovered in the air, as if scenting the first drops of human blood.

Powerful as it was, however, the design had less to do with the effect of this strange picture than the marvellous poetry of the execution. There was a dramatic unity about it which I find it impossible to describe — an atmosphere of death and horror that seemed to foul the very air around it. The face of Cain was instinct with unearthly meaning. The cold sweat stood in visible beads upon his brow, and his eyes were fixed as if upon some fearful vision. The very sea beyond looked thick and lifeless. The very trees were like funereal plumes.

When I went out, the sunshine of the summer afternoon offended my eyes. I chose a shady avenue, and there paced to and fro, thinking of the picture. Evening came, and it still haunted me. I strove to shake off the weird influence. I stepped into one of the theatres — but the laughter, the music, the lights were alike insupportable to me. Then I went home to my books, but could not read — to bed, but sleep forsook my pillow.

Thus the night wore past, and morning found me again at the Luxembourg. I had come too early; and I rambled about with feverish impatience till the gallery was opened. I spent the whole of that day before the painting. I resolved to copy it. The next day I had taken up my position *en permanence*, and begun my task.

From this moment, the picture began to exercise a strange, mysterious influence upon my whole being. I dreaded it; yet could not tear myself from it. My health suffered; my nerves were painfully overwrought; my sleep and appetite failed. I started at the merest sound; I trembled as I crossed the public streets. Unless when in the very act of painting, my hand lost its steadiness and my eye its certainty. I could not endure the light of an unshaded candle — nor pour out a glass of water without spilling it.

This was but the first stage of my disease. The second was still more distressing.

A morbid fascination now seemed to bind me to the picture, and the picture to me. I felt as if I could not live away from it. Cain became for me as a living man, or something more than man, having

possession of my will, and transfixing me with the bright horror of his eyes. At night, when the gallery was closed, I used to linger in the neighbourhood for hours, unable to break the spell that chained me to my task; and when at last, worn out with fatigue, I went home and flung myself upon my bed, I lay awake half the night, or slept to dream of that which haunted me when waking.

Let it not be supposed that I yielded myself a willing victim to this monomania. Far from it. I wrestled with my torment — I reasoned, struggled, combatted — but all in vain. It was too strong for me; and I had no one to help me in the fight. I felt at last that I might die, or go mad, and there would be none to weep for me. I asked myself over and over again whither I was tending? What I should do? To whom appeal for aid and sympathy? Should I write to my friends in England? Should I leave Paris? Alas! my volition was gone. I was the slave of the picture, and though at the price of life or reason, I felt I must remain.

Matters were at this crisis (and I believe my senses were fast abandoning me) when a young man, somewhat older than myself, took up his position in the same room, and began copying a picture distant only a few yards from that on which I was employed. His presence irritated me. I felt that I was no longer alone, and I dreaded interruption.

He was a very quiet fellow, however, and so fully respected my taciturnity, that I soon ceased to remember I was no longer alone. His name, I should observe, was Achille Désiré Leroy.

It were both useless and painful to enter upon a more minute analysis of my mental condition. It became each day less and less endurable; as I became each day less capable of resistance. The whole thing wears now, in my memory, the aspect of a dream — long, vivid, terrible; but still a dream.

At last the time came when body and mind could bear their bondage no longer. The afternoon was dark and oppressive, as if a tempest were brewing. Not a breath of air found its way to the gloomy corner in which I sat at work. The bright, cruel eyes of Cain seemed to pierce my very brain. I felt as if I were being suffocated. My head swam — my heart throbbed — my brush fell from my fingers. All at once I fell back in my chair, uttered a despairing cry, and covered my face with my hands.

"You are ill," said a voice close by.

I turned, and found Achille Leroy standing beside me.

"It is nothing," I faltered.

He shook his head.

"I have been observing you," he said, "for some days past. You are ill; and need not only change of air and scene, but change of occupation. This picture of Prévost's is not good for you."

"I must finish it," I replied with a shudder.

"We will discuss that question presently," said M. Leroy. "In the meanwhile, a breath of fresh air will do you more service than advice. Lean upon my arm, and come out with me for half an hour into the gardens."

I was passive as a child, and obeyed him without a word. He led me out among the trees, and sought a bench in a retired spot, where we sat down. For some time we were both silent. When at length my companion spoke, it was to urge upon me the abandonment of my undertaking.

"You are wrong," he said, "to set yourself so frightful a task. Let me recommend you to give it up from this moment."

"Alas!" I said, "I cannot."

"Why not? If the copy be a commission, it is already admirable, and needs not another touch.

"It is not that," I replied gloomily. "I have copied the picture for my own satisfaction — or rather for my own torment — and it has taken a hold upon me that I cannot shake off."

He looked at me with compassionate incredulity.

"If — if you will promise not to regard me as a madman," I added, "I will explain my words."

He promised, and I told him all that I have here recorded. When I had brought my narrative to an end, he rose, walked thoughtfully to and fro under the trees, and then, returning to his seat beside me, said: —

"As a stranger, I have no right to offer you counsel; but as a brother artist, and fellow-student, I feel as if it were my duty to make one more effort. If you will entrust me with the sale of your copy, I will undertake to find you a purchaser. But I implore you never again to look upon original or copy while you live. In urging this course upon you, I am actuated by no ordinary motive. I know the

picture to be a fatal picture. I know its history, and the history of him who painted it. If you are strong enough to listen to me for a quarter of an hour, I will relate the circumstances to you as briefly as I can."

I expressed my eagerness to hear them; and M. Leroy thus began:

"Camille Prévost was the younger of two brothers. I knew them both intimately. Their father was a *négociant* of moderate fortune, residing a few miles north of Paris. He died about ten years since, leaving the bulk of his property to Hippolyte Prévost, his elder son. Camille was a painter; Hippolyte a *négociant*, like his father. The brothers were both unamiable men. Hippolyte was prudent, cold, and crafty; Camille was sullen, vindictive, and reserved. I seldom visited Hippolyte after the death of his father; and had I not met Camille daily at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, I have little doubt that our acquaintance would have ceased altogether.

"Camille Prévost was an unloveable man, but, like many unloveable men, he could love, and love passionately. As lovers, these reserved men are exacting; as husbands, jealous; as fathers, harsh; as friends, suspicious. But their attachments, however unpromising, are profound, and, like their enmities, life-long. Camille loved his cousin, Mademoiselle Dumesnil. She was young, rich, and tolerably handsome, and resided in the Faubourg St. Germain. Camille Prévost was a proud man, and could not endure to owe his social position to any woman, however beloved; so, having made his declaration, and obtained the consent of the lady and

her family, he went for three years to Italy, to study the works of the Italian masters, and achieve some fame, if not some fortune.' By the help of great natural talent, an iron will, and a dauntless ambition, he rose rapidly in his profession. In the course of the first two years he carried off several prizes at the Academies of St. Luca in Rome, and the Belle Arti of Venice; and towards the close of the third, sent home a painting of such remarkable merit that it obtained him the rank of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

"On receiving intelligence of this great success, he returned to France, radiant with gratified ambition, and elate with hope. But these three years which had been so fortunate in one way, had proved fatal in another.

"Mademoiselle Dumesnil was married to his brother.

"Wholly unprepared for the blow that awaited him, he had hastened to her hôtel immediately upon his arrival. He asked for Mademoiselle Dumesnil, and was told that Madame Prévost was at home. He found her at breakfast, and his brother, in his dressing-gown and slippers, sipping his coffee at the opposite corner of the table. Hippolyte had played his cards well; and while Camille was toiling fourteen hours a day in his Roman *atelier*, the unscrupulous elder brother had stepped in, and borne away the bride with her twenty thousand livres of dowry.

"The lady received her former lover as coolly and calmly as if they had never been betrothed.

Hippolyte affected cordiality, and pressed his brother to make the Hôtel Prévost his home whenever he might be in Paris. Camille disguised his fury under a mask of stern politeness. He neither wept nor stormed. Outwardly cold and cynical as ever, he betrayed by neither look nor word the passions that raged at his heart. When he took his leave, Monsieur and Madame Prévost flattered themselves that the wanderer had forgotten all about his early love.

"'Three years in Italy, *ma chère*,' said the husband, as he drew on his gloves, and prepared to take his daily ride in the Bois, 'make wonderful havoc in a lover's memory. Depend on it, he is as glad to have regained his liberty as I am to have relinquished mine.'

"About a week after this, the body of M. Hippolyte Prévost was found in one of the *contre allées* of the Bois de Boulogne, with a bullet in his brain, and his horse feeding quietly beside him.

"There was a long and tedious investigation, the details of which have long since escaped my recollection. Several persons were in turn suspected; but the murder could be brought home to none, and the event was in time forgotten. Camille, having inherited the greater part of his brother's fortune, continued to follow his profession with unabated industry. It was rumoured at first that he would marry his brother's widow; but, on the contrary, he avoided her by every means in his power; and at last those who had prophecied of his marriage were

heard to whisper that he had taken a solemn oath never to see, or speak with her again.

"About this time he began his last and best painting — 'Cain after the Murder of Abel.' I need say nothing to you of the merits of this extraordinary work. You have studied it more closely than I, and know it only too well.

"Always misanthropic, Camille Prévost had sunk, ever since his return from Rome, into a dark and sullen melancholy. He shut himself up in his rooms; saw no one; and worked without intermission upon this fatal picture. Day by day, and week by week, he wasted away, beneath the burthen of a fascination which, like yourself, he could neither resist nor control. As the painting progressed, his sufferings became more acute, and his strength diminished. A profound despondency was succeeded by paroxysms of nervous terror. There were times when he would shriek aloud, as if unable to endure the sight of his own handiwork; and once or twice he was found insensible at the foot of his easel. On one of these occasions his servants called in the nearest medical man, who in vain strove to persuade his patient to lay the picture aside, and try change of air and scene. Camille refused to listen to him, and the doctor's visit was never repeated.

"At last the painting was finished, exhibited, and purchased by the Government.

"As one of our modern masterpieces, it occupies its present position on the walls of the Luxembourg. Doubtless a day will come when, to use the language of the catalogue, 'it will receive a last and honour-

able asylum in the galleries of the Louvre, where it will take a place beside its illustrious predecessors, and continue the history of French Art.'"

"But the artist?" I exclaimed, when Leroy had brought his story to an end. "What became of Camille Prévost?"

We had risen from our quiet seat under the acacias some minutes back, and were now strolling down the shady side of an old-fashioned street adjoining the gardens. As I spoke, we arrived in front of a large private mansion approached by a pair of ponderous wooden gates thickly studded with bosses of iron. To my surprise, Monsieur Leroy, instead of replying to my question, rang the bell, nodded to the *concierge*, and requested me to follow him.

We passed through a spacious courtyard, up a flight of steps, and into a large hall paved with alternate squares of black and white marble. Here we were met by an elderly man of mild and benevolent aspect, who shook hands with my companion, and pointed to the staircase.

"You know your way, Monsieur Leroy," he said. "You will find François in the corridor."

To which my fellow-student replied by a word of acknowledgment, and preceded me up the stairs. At the first landing, we were met by an attendant in a sombre livery of grey and black, who saluted us in silence, and led the way through a long corridor in which were some ten or twelve doors, thickly clamped with iron. Before the last of these he paused,

took a key from his pocket, unlocked the door, and stood aside to let us pass.

I found myself in a small sitting-room, neatly, but plainly furnished. Close under the window stood an easel, and on the easel an incoherent fantastic daub in oil, more like a paint-smeared palette than a picture. The window, like the door, was closely barred, and looked out into a dreary yard surrounded by high walls. I shuddered. There was a heavy, unnatural silence about the house, a kind of palpable gloom, that chilled me like an evil presence.

"What place in this?" I said. "Why have you brought me here?"

Monsieur Leroy pointed to a door at the farther end of the room, which the attendant proceeded to unlock like the first.

At this moment a frightful scream rang through the rooms — a scream so shrill, so agonized, so dissonant, that I involuntarily covered my face with my hands, as if some awful sight must follow it.

"There is the painter," said Leroy. "There is Camille Prévost."

I looked in. One glance was enough — one glance at a wild, pale, savage face, from which all light of human reason had faded. In Camille Prévost I saw a raging madman, strapped down upon a wooden pallet, laughing, screaming, blaspheming, and crying aloud that he was Cain — Cain, the slayer of Abel!

"And is he really the murderer of his brother?" I asked, as I turned away, cold and horror-stricken.

"God only knows," replied my fellow-student. "This is one of his violent days, and he always accuses himself when the paroxysm is upon him. At all events, you now know why I have brought you hither. That fatal picture has driven one painter mad, and I was determined it should not do the same by another."

CHAPTER III.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE TREASURE ISLES.*

It was on the 26th of October, 1760, at twenty-seven minutes past ten o'clock, a. m., that I shook hands for the last time with those worthy merchants and shipowners, Messrs. Fisher, Clarke, and Fisher, of Bristol. I went at once on board the *Mary-Jane*, then lying alongside the drawbridge by St. Augustine's parade, in the very heart of the old city. It was my first command, so I stepped on deck with some little pride of heart, and bade the men weigh anchor. My exultation may be pardoned when it is recollected that I was only twenty-six years of age, and naturally thought it a fine thing to be captain of a tight little trading schooner like the *Mary-Jane*, with a valuable cargo on board, and a mate, three sailors, and a boy under my absolute authority.

The flags were flying from every masthead and steeple, and the bells were pealing clamorously, as we worked out of port that morning; for it was the very day of the king's** accession, and all Bristol was wild with loyalty. I remember as well as if it

* From a MS. found on a bookstall.

** The writer alludes, evidently, to King George III., who was proclaimed throughout the kingdom on the 26th October, 1760; King George II. having died suddenly, at Kensington, on the 25th.

re yesterday, how the sailors cheered from the
ps as we went down the Avon; and how my men
ew up their hats in reply, and shouted, "Long
e King George!" The Avon, however, was soon
t behind, and we entered the Bristol Channel with
avourable wind, all sail set, and a sky brilliant
h sunshine above our heads. We were bound,
hould observe, for Jamaica, and carried a cargo
sisting chiefly of printed goods, hardware, and
lery, which it was my duty to deliver to the
signee at Kingston. This done, my instructions
re to ship a return cargo of cotton, indigo, rum,
l other West Indian products. Perhaps it may
as well to add, that the *Mary-Jane* carried about
undred tons burthen, that my name is William
rton, and my mate's name was Aaron Taylor.

The *Mary-Jane* was not a quick sailer, as I soon
covered; but she was a good, sound, steady little
ft, and I consoled myself by remembering that
ety was better than speed. It was dusk before
reached Lundy Island, and almost daylight next
rning when we passed the Land's-End. This was
w work; but as the wind had shifted a point or
o during the night, I made the best of matters,
l tried to hope we should do better by-and-by.
ter tossing about somewhat roughly off the Bay of
scay, we made Cape Finisterre on the 4th of
vember; and on the 18th put in at Terceira for
ter. Having remained here for the best part of
o days, we put to sea again on the evening of
e 20th. The wind now began to set in more and
re against us, and ended by blowing steadily

from the South; so that, although we had glorious weather over head, we made almost as little way as if we had had storms to contend against. At length, after a week of ineffectual beating about, just as I was going to turn the ship's head and run back to Terceira, the breeze shifted suddenly to the North. The N. W. would have suited us better; but if we could not get exactly the wind we most wanted, we were thankful, at all events, to tack about, and make such progress as was possible.

Thus we went forward slowly towards the tropics, attended by perpetual sunshine and cloudless skies, and enjoying a climate that grew milder and more delicious every day. The incidents of our voyage, up to this time, had been few and unimportant. A Dutch merchantman seen one morning in the offing — a porpoise caught by one of the crew — a flight of swallows on the wing — a shark following the ship. These, and similar trifles, were all the events that befel us for many a week; events which are nothing when related, and yet afford matter for vivid interest to those on shipboard. At length, on the 15th of December, we entered the tropic of Cancer; and on the 19th sailed into a light sea-fog, which surprised us very much at such a season, and in such a latitude; but which was welcome, nevertheless, for the sun's heat was now becoming intense, and seemed as if it would burn the very deck beneath our feet. All that day the fog hung low upon the sea, the wind fell, and the waters were lulled almost to a calm. My mate predicted a hurricane; but no hurricane came. On the contrary,

picture to be a fatal picture. I know its history, and the history of him who painted it. If you are strong enough to listen to me for a quarter of an hour, I will relate the circumstances to you as briefly as I can."

I expressed my eagerness to hear them; and M. Leroy thus began:

"Camille Prévost was the younger of two brothers. I knew them both intimately. Their father was a *négociant* of moderate fortune, residing a few miles north of Paris. He died about ten years since, leaving the bulk of his property to Hippolyte Prévost, his elder son. Camille was a painter; Hippolyte a *négociant*, like his father. The brothers were both unamiable men. Hippolyte was prudent, cold, and crafty; Camille was sullen, vindictive, and reserved. I seldom visited Hippolyte after the death of his father; and had I not met Camille daily at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, I have little doubt that our acquaintance would have ceased altogether.

"Camille Prévost was an unloveable man, but, like many unloveable men, he could love, and love passionately. As lovers, these reserved men are exacting; as husbands, jealous; as fathers, harsh; as friends, suspicious. But their attachments, however unpromising, are profound, and, like their enmities, life-long. Camille loved his cousin, Mademoiselle Dumesnil. She was young, rich, and tolerably handsome, and resided in the Faubourg St. Germain. Camille Prévost was a proud man, and could not endure to owe his social position to any woman, however beloved; so, having made his declaration, and obtained the consent of the lady and

break the silence than the murmuring of the water along the ship's side, and the creaking of the wheel in the hands of the steersman, I fell into a profound reverie. I thought of my friends far away; of my old home among the Mendip hills; of Bessie Robinson, who had promised to become my wife when I went back after this voyage; of a thousand hopes and projects, far enough removed from the schooner *Mary-Jane*, or any soul on board. From these dreams I was suddenly roused by the voice of Joshua Dunn shouting in a quick, startled tone — "Ship ahoy!"

I was alive in a moment at this cry, for we were at war with both France and Spain at the time, and it would have been no pleasant matter to fall in with an enemy; especially as there had been some fierce fights more than once in these very waters since the war began. So I pulled up in my walk, looked sharply round on all sides, and saw nothing but fog.

"Whereabouts, Josh?" I cried.

"Coming right up, sir, under our weather-bow," replied the steersman.

I stepped aft, and, staring steadily in the direction indicated, saw, sure enough, the faint glimmer of a couple of lanthorns, coming up through the fog. To dash down into my cabin, seize a brace of pistols and my speaking-trumpet, and spring up again on deck, just as the spectral outline of a large brig loomed up almost within a stone's throw of the ship's side, was the work of a moment. I then stood silent, and waited, ready to answer if hailed, and willing enough to slip along unobserved in the fog, if our

formidable neighbour passed us by. I had scarcely waited a moment, however, before a loud voice, made louder by the use of the trumpet, rang through the thick air, crying: —

"Ship ahoy! What name? Where from? Whither bound?"

To which I replied: —

"Trading schooner *Mary-Jane* — from Bristol to Jamaica. What ship? Where from? Whither bound?"

There was a moment's silence. Then the same voice replied: —

"The *Adventure*. Homeward bound."

The reply was informal.

"Where from?" I repeated. What cargo?"

Again there seemed some hesitation on the part of the stranger; and again, after an instant's pause, he answered: —

"From the Treasure Isles, with gold and jewels."

From the Treasure Isles, with gold and jewels! I could not credit my ears. I had never heard of the Treasure Isles in my life. I had never seen them on any chart. I did not believe that any such islands existed.

"What Isles?" I shouted, the question springing to my lips as the doubt flashed on my mind.

"The Treasure Isles."

"What bearings?"

"Latitude twenty-two, thirty. Longitude sixty-three, fifteen."

"Have you any chart?"

"Yes."

"Will you show it?"

"Ay, ay. Come aboard, and see."

I bade the steersman lay to. The stranger did the same. Presently her great hull towered up beside us like a huge rock; a rope was thrown; a chain ladder lowered; and I stepped on deck. I looked round for the captain. A tall, gaunt man stood before me, with his belt full of pistols, and a speaking-trumpet under his arm. Beside him stood a sailor with a torch, the light from which flickered redly through the thick air, and showed some twenty men, or more, gathered round the binnacle. All were as silent as ghosts, and, seen through the mist, looked as unsubstantial.

The captain put his hand to his hat, looked at me with eyes that glittered like live coals, and said: —

"You want to see the chart of the islands?"

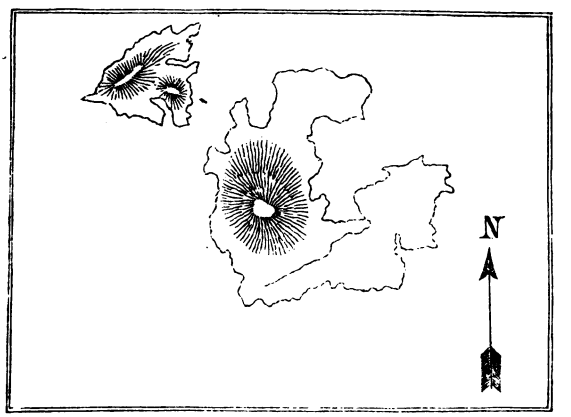
"I do, sir."

"Follow me."

The sailor lighted us down, the captain went first, and I followed. As I passed down the cabin-stairs I eased the pistols in my belt, ready for use if necessary; for there was something strange about the captain and his crew — something strange in the very build and aspect of the ship, that puzzled me, and put me on my guard.

The captain's cabin was large, low, and gloomy, lighted by an oil-lamp swinging from the roof, like a murderer swinging in chains; fitted with old carved furniture that might have been oak, but was as black as ebony; and plentifully garnished about the

walls with curious weapons of all kinds of antique shapes and workmanship. On the table lay a parchment chart, elaborately drawn in red ink, and yellow with age. The captain silently laid his finger on the very centre of the parchment, and kept his glittering eyes fixed full upon me. I leaned over the chart, silent as himself, and saw two islands, a greater and a less, lying just in the latitude he had named, with a narrow strait between them. The larger was somewhat crescent shaped; the smaller inclined to a triangular form, and lay up to the N. W. of the other, just in this fashion —



Both were very irregular in the outline. The little island seemed hilly throughout, the large one was scooped into a deep bay on the N. E. side, and was piled up into what appeared like a lofty moun-

took a key from his pocket, unlocked the door, and stood aside to let us pass.

I found myself in a small sitting-room, neatly, but plainly furnished. Close under the window stood an easel, and on the easel an incoherent fantastic daub in oil, more like a paint-smeared palette than a picture. The window, like the door, was closely barred, and looked out into a dreary yard surrounded by high walls. I shuddered. There was a heavy, unnatural silence about the house, a kind of palpable gloom, that chilled me like an evil presence.

"What place in this?" I said. "Why have you brought me here?"

Monsieur Leroy pointed to a door at the farther end of the room, which the attendant proceeded to unlock like the first.

At this moment a frightful scream rang through the rooms — a scream so shrill, so agonized, so dissonant, that I involuntarily covered my face with my hands, as if some awful sight must follow it.

"There is the painter," said Leroy. "There is Camille Prévost."

I looked in. One glance was enough — one glance at a wild, pale, savage face, from which all light of human reason had faded. In Camille Prévost I saw a raging madman, strapped down upon a wooden pallet, laughing, screaming, blaspheming, and crying aloud that he was Cain — Cain, the slayer of Abel!

"And is he really the murderer of his brother?" I asked, as I turned away, cold and horror-stricken.

"God only knows," replied my fellow-student. "This is one of his violent days, and he always accuses himself when the paroxysm is upon him. At all events, you now know why I have brought you hither. That fatal picture has driven one painter mad, and I was determined it should not do the same by another."

CHAPTER III.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE TREASURE ISLES.*

It was on the 26th of October, 1760, at twenty-seven minutes past ten o'clock, a. m., that I shook hands for the last time with those worthy merchants and shipowners, Messrs. Fisher, Clarke, and Fisher, of Bristol. I went at once on board the *Mary-Jane*, then lying alongside the drawbridge by St. Augustine's parade, in the very heart of the old city. It was my first command, so I stepped on deck with some little pride of heart, and bade the men weigh anchor. My exultation may be pardoned when it is recollected that I was only twenty-six years of age, and naturally thought it a fine thing to be captain of a tight little trading schooner like the *Mary-Jane*, with a valuable cargo on board, and a mate, three sailors, and a boy under my absolute authority.

The flags were flying from every masthead and steeple, and the bells were pealing clamorously, as we worked out of port that morning; for it was the very day of the king's** accession, and all Bristol was wild with loyalty. I remember as well as if it

* From a MS. found on a bookstall.

** The writer alludes, evidently, to King George III., who was proclaimed throughout the kingdom on the 26th October, 1760; King George II. having died suddenly, at Kensington, on the 25th.

were yesterday, how the sailors cheered from the ships as we went down the Avon; and how my men threw up their hats in reply, and shouted, "Long live King George!" The Avon, however, was soon left behind, and we entered the Bristol Channel with a favourable wind, all sail set, and a sky brilliant with sunshine above our heads. We were bound, I should observe, for Jamaica, and carried a cargo consisting chiefly of printed goods, hardware, and cutlery, which it was my duty to deliver to the consignee at Kingston. This done, my instructions were to ship a return cargo of cotton, indigo, rum, and other West Indian products. Perhaps it may be as well to add, that the *Mary-Jane* carried about a hundred tons burthen, that my name is William Burton, and my mate's name was Aaron Taylor.

The *Mary-Jane* was not a quick sailer, as I soon discovered; but she was a good, sound, steady little craft, and I consoled myself by remembering that safety was better than speed. It was dusk before we reached Lundy Island, and almost daylight next morning when we passed the Land's-End. This was slow work; but as the wind had shifted a point or two during the night, I made the best of matters, and tried to hope we should do better by-and-by. After tossing about somewhat roughly off the Bay of Biscay, we made Cape Finisterre on the 4th of November; and on the 18th put in at Terceira for water. Having remained here for the best part of two days, we put to sea again on the evening of the 20th. The wind now began to set in more and more against us, and ended by blowing steadily

from the South; so that, although we had glorious weather over head, we made almost as little way as if we had had storms to contend against. At length, after a week of ineffectual beating about, just as I was going to turn the ship's head and run back to Terceira, the breeze shifted suddenly to the North. The N. W. would have suited us better; but if we could not get exactly the wind we most wanted, we were thankful, at all events, to tack about, and make such progress as was possible.

Thus we went forward slowly towards the tropics, attended by perpetual sunshine and cloudless skies, and enjoying a climate that grew milder and more delicious every day. The incidents of our voyage, up to this time, had been few and unimportant. A Dutch merchantman seen one morning in the offing — a porpoise caught by one of the crew — a flight of swallows on the wing — a shark following the ship. These, and similar trifles, were all the events that befel us for many a week; events which are nothing when related, and yet afford matter for vivid interest to those on shipboard. At length, on the 15th of December, we entered the tropic of Cancer; and on the 19th sailed into a light sea-fog, which surprised us very much at such a season, and in such a latitude; but which was welcome, nevertheless, for the sun's heat was now becoming intense, and seemed as if it would burn the very deck beneath our feet. All that day the fog hung low upon the sea, the wind fell, and the waters were lulled almost to a calm. My mate predicted a hurricane; but no hurricane came. On the contrary,

ea and air stagnated more and more; and the last reath of wind died away as the sun went down. Then the sudden tropical night closed in, and the eat grew more oppressive than before.

I went to my cabin to write, as was my custom n the evening; but, though I wore only a thin linen uit, and kept every port-hole open, I felt as if the abin was a coffin, and would suffocate me. Having orne it till I could bear it no longer, I threw the en aside and went on deck again. There I found Aaron Taylor keeping the first watch; and our oungest seaman, Joshua Dunn, at the helm.

"Close night, mate," said I.

"Queerest night *I* ever saw, sir, in these latiudes," replied Aaron.

"What way do we make?"

"None, sir, hardly: scarce one knot an hour."

"Have the men all turned in?"

"All, sir, except Dunn and me."

"Then you may turn in too, mate," said I. "I'll eep this watch and the next myself."

The mate touched his hat, and with a glad "Ay, y, sir," disappeared down the companion-ladder. We ere so small a crew that I always took my turn at he watch, and to-night, feeling it impossible to stay elow, willingly charged myself with the double uty.

It was now about ten o'clock. There was somehing almost awful in the heavy stillness of the ight, and in the thin, white, ghastly fog that folded ound us on all sides, like a shroud. Pacing to and ro along the solitary deck, with no other sounds to

break the silence than the murmuring of the water along the ship's side, and the creaking of the wheel in the hands of the steersman, I fell into a profound reverie. I thought of my friends far away; of my old home among the Mendip hills; of Bessie Robinson, who had promised to become my wife when I went back after this voyage; of a thousand hopes and projects, far enough removed from the schooner *Mary-Jane*, or any soul on board. From these dreams I was suddenly roused by the voice of Joshua Dunn shouting in a quick, startled tone — "Ship ahoy!"

I was alive in a moment at this cry, for we were at war with both France and Spain at the time, and it would have been no pleasant matter to fall in with an enemy; especially as there had been some fierce fights more than once in these very waters since the war began. So I pulled up in my walk, looked sharply round on all sides, and saw nothing but fog.

"Whereabouts, Josh?" I cried.

"Coming right up, sir, under our weather-bow," replied the steersman.

I stepped aft, and, staring steadily in the direction indicated, saw, sure enough, the faint glimmer of a couple of lanthorns, coming up through the fog. To dash down into my cabin, seize a brace of pistols and my speaking-trumpet, and spring up again on deck, just as the spectral outline of a large brig loomed up almost within a stone's throw of the ship's side, was the work of a moment. I then stood silent, and waited, ready to answer if hailed, and willing enough to slip along unobserved in the fog, if our

formidable neighbour passed us by. I had scarcely waited a moment, however, before a loud voice, made louder by the use of the trumpet, rang through the thick air, crying: —

"Ship ahoy! What name? Where from? Whither bound?"

To which I replied: —

"Trading schooner *Mary-Jane* — from Bristol to Jamaica. What ship? Where from? Whither bound?"

There was a moment's silence. Then the same voice replied: —

"The *Adventure*. Homeward bound."

The reply was informal.

"Where from?" I repeated. What cargo?"

Again there seemed some hesitation on the part of the stranger; and again, after an instant's pause, he answered: —

"From the Treasure Isles, with gold and jewels."

From the Treasure Isles, with gold and jewels! I could not credit my ears. I had never heard of the Treasure Isles in my life. I had never seen them on any chart. I did not believe that any such islands existed.

"What Isles?" I shouted, the question springing to my lips as the doubt flashed on my mind.

"The Treasure Isles."

"What bearings?"

"Latitude twenty-two, thirty. Longitude sixty-three, fifteen."

"Have you any chart?"

"Yes."

"Will you show it?"

"Ay, ay. Come aboard, and see."

I bade the steersman lay to. The stranger did the same. Presently her great hull towered up beside us like a huge rock; a rope was thrown; a chain ladder lowered; and I stepped on deck. I looked round for the captain. A tall, gaunt man stood before me, with his belt full of pistols, and a speaking-trumpet under his arm. Beside him stood a sailor with a torch, the light from which flickered redly through the thick air, and showed some twenty men, or more, gathered round the binnacle. All were as silent as ghosts, and, seen through the mist, looked as unsubstantial.

The captain put his hand to his hat, looked at me with eyes that glittered like live coals, and said: —

"You want to see the chart of the islands?"

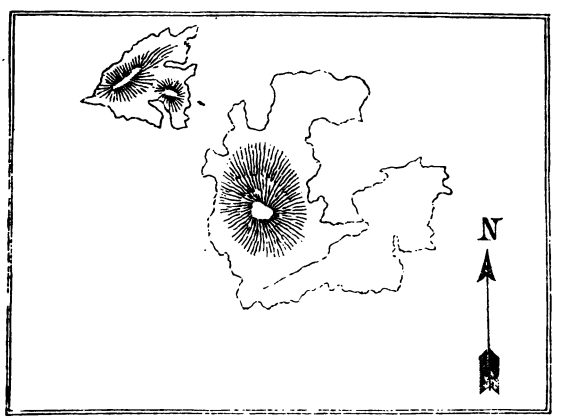
"I do, sir."

"Follow me."

The sailor lighted us down, the captain went first, and I followed. As I passed down the cabin-stairs I eased the pistols in my belt, ready for use if necessary; for there was something strange about the captain and his crew — something strange in the very build and aspect of the ship, that puzzled me, and put me on my guard.

The captain's cabin was large, low, and gloomy, lighted by an oil-lamp swinging from the roof, like a murderer swinging in chains; fitted with old carved furniture that might have been oak, but was as black as ebony; and plentifully garnished about the

walls with curious weapons of all kinds of antique shapes and workmanship. On the table lay a parchment chart, elaborately drawn in red ink, and yellow with age. The captain silently laid his finger on the very centre of the parchment, and kept his glittering eyes fixed full upon me. I leaned over the chart, silent as himself, and saw two islands, a greater and a less, lying just in the latitude he had named, with a narrow strait between them. The larger was somewhat crescent shaped; the smaller inclined to a triangular form, and lay up to the N. W. of the other, just in this fashion —



Both were very irregular in the outline. The little island seemed hilly throughout, the large one was scooped into a deep bay on the N. E. side, and was piled up into what appeared like a lofty moun-

CHAPTER III.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE TREASURE ISLES.*

It was on the 26th of October, 1760, at twenty-seven minutes past ten o'clock, a. m., that I shook hands for the last time with those worthy merchants and shipowners, Messrs. Fisher, Clarke, and Fisher, of Bristol. I went at once on board the *Mary-Jane*, then lying alongside the drawbridge by St. Augustine's parade, in the very heart of the old city. It was my first command, so I stepped on deck with some little pride of heart, and bade the men weigh anchor. My exultation may be pardoned when it is recollected that I was only twenty-six years of age, and naturally thought it a fine thing to be captain of a tight little trading schooner like the *Mary-Jane*, with a valuable cargo on board, and a mate, three sailors, and a boy under my absolute authority.

The flags were flying from every masthead and steeple, and the bells were pealing clamorously, as we worked out of port that morning; for it was the very day of the king's** accession, and all Bristol was wild with loyalty. I remember as well as if it

* From a MS. found on a bookstall.

** The writer alludes, evidently, to King George III., who was proclaimed throughout the kingdom on the 26th October, 1760; King George II. having died suddenly, at Kensington, on the 25th.

were yesterday, how the sailors cheered from the ships as we went down the Avon; and how my men threw up their hats in reply, and shouted, "Long live King George!" The Avon, however, was soon left behind, and we entered the Bristol Channel with a favourable wind, all sail set, and a sky brilliant with sunshine above our heads. We were bound, I should observe, for Jamaica, and carried a cargo consisting chiefly of printed goods, hardware, and cutlery, which it was my duty to deliver to the consignee at Kingston. This done, my instructions were to ship a return cargo of cotton, indigo, rum, and other West Indian products. Perhaps it may be as well to add, that the *Mary-Jane* carried about a hundred tons burthen, that my name is William Burton, and my mate's name was Aaron Taylor.

The *Mary-Jane* was not a quick sailer, as I soon discovered; but she was a good, sound, steady little craft, and I consoled myself by remembering that safety was better than speed. It was dusk before we reached Lundy Island, and almost daylight next morning when we passed the Land's-End. This was slow work; but as the wind had shifted a point or two during the night, I made the best of matters, and tried to hope we should do better by-and-by. After tossing about somewhat roughly off the Bay of Biscay, we made Cape Finisterre on the 4th of November; and on the 18th put in at Terceira for water. Having remained here for the best part of two days, we put to sea again on the evening of the 20th. The wind now began to set in more and more against us, and ended by blowing steadily

the chain-ladder. "Did you not say latitude twenty-two, thirty?"

"Yes."

"And longitude sixty-three, fifteen?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, sir, and good night."

"Good night," replied the captain, his eyes glowing in his head like fiery carbuncles. "Good night, and a pleasant voyage to you."

With this he burst into a laugh louder and more hollow than ever — a laugh which was instantly taken up, echoed, and re-echoed by all the sailors aboard.

I sprang down upon my own deck in a towering passion, and swore at them pretty roundly, for a set of unmannerly lubbers; but this seemed only to redouble their infernal mirth. Then the *Adventure* hove off, faded again to a mere spectre, and disappeared in the mist just as the last peal of laughter died away, mockingly, in the distance.

The *Mary-Jane* now resumed her course, and I my watch. The same heavy silence brooded over the night. The same fog closed around our path. I alone was changed. My entire being seemed to have undergone a strange and sudden revolution. The whole current of my thoughts, the very hopes, aims, and purposes of my life were turned into a new channel. I thought of nothing but the Treasure Isles, and their untold wealth of gold and jewels. Why should not I seize upon my share of the spoil? Had I not as good a right to enrich myself as any other man that sailed the seas? I had but to turn

the ship's course, and possess the wealth of kingdoms. Who was to prevent me? Who should gainsay me? The schooner was not my own vessel, it was true; but would not her owners be more than satisfied if I brought them back double the value of her cargo in solid ingots? I might do this, and still have fabulous treasure for myself. It seemed like madness to delay even for a single hour; and yet I hesitated. I had no right to deviate from the route prescribed by my employers. I was bound to deliver my cargo at Jamaica within a given time, wind and weather permitting; and we had already lost weeks upon the way. Beset by alternate doubts and desires, I went to my berth at the close of the second watch. I might as well have tried to sleep in the powder magazine of a burning ship. If I closed my eyes, the parchment chart lay before them as plainly as when I saw it on the captain's table. If I opened them, the two islands appeared as if traced upon the darkness in lines of fire. At length I felt I could lie there inactive no longer. I rose, dressed, lit my lamp, took out my own book of charts, and set myself to enter the Treasure Isles in their places on the map. Having drawn them in accurately with pencil, and then traced over the pencillings with ink, I felt a little calmer, and turned in again. This time I fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, and woke, dreaming of riches, just at dawn.

My first proceeding was to go on deck and take an observation of our position. The result of this observation was to show me, beyond all doubt, that we were then distant about seventy-two hours' sail

from the coast of the larger island; whereupon, I yielded to a temptation stronger than my will or my reason, and changed the ship's course.

That decisive step once taken, I fell into a state of feverish eagerness, which allowed me no rest of body or mind. I could neither sleep, nor eat, nor sit still, nor remain in one spot for three minutes together. I went up to the masthead twenty times a day on the look-out for land; and raged against the fog, as if it were sent from heaven on purpose to torment me. My seamen thought I was mad; and so I was. Mad with the thirst of gain, as many a sane man has been before and since.

At length, on the morning of the third day, Aaron Taylor came to me in my cabin, and ventured on a respectful remonstrance. We had already deviated, he said, two degrees from our course, and were making straight for the Bahama islands, instead of for Jamaica. Had we kept steadily on our way, we should have shortly touched at Porto Rico for provisions and water; but both were running short, and could not possibly hold out for anything like the time it would take us to make land in the present direction. In reply to this statement, I showed my chart with the two islands sketched in according to their bearings.

He looked at them, shook his head, and said very earnestly: —

"I have sailed in these latitudes for the last fifteen years, your honour, and I'll take my Bible oath there are no such islands."

Whereupon I flew into a violent fit of anger, as

if the mate had presumed to doubt my word, and forbade him ever to speak to me on the subject again. My temper, in short, was as much impaired as my peace of mind, or, indeed, as my sense of duty; and gold, accursed gold, was at the bottom of it all!

Thus the third day passed on, and still the fog hung round and seemed to follow us. The seamen did their work sullenly, and whispered together when my back was turned. The mate looked pale and grave, like a man whose mind was full of anxious thoughts. For my part, I was more resolute than ever, and silently vowed to shoot the first sailor who showed a sign of mutiny. To this end I cleaned and primed my pistols, and hid a Spanish dagger between my waistcoat and my belt. Thus the long, monotonous hours went on, and the sun sank, and yet no land, nor indication of land, had appeared on any side.

Sixty-five hours out of the seventy-two had now gone by, and it seemed as if the remaining seven would never expire. To sleep was impossible; so I paced the deck all night, and watched as eagerly for the first gleam of dawn as if my life depended on it. As the morning drew nearer, my excitement became almost more than I could bear. I even felt as if I would gladly have put off the moment which I had been so passionately awaiting.

At length the eastward grey grew visibly lighter, and was followed by a broad crimson flush all across the heavens. I went up aloft, trembling in every limb. As I reached the top-gallant-mast, the sun

break the silence than the murmuring of the water along the ship's side, and the creaking of the wheel in the hands of the steersman, I fell into a profound reverie. I thought of my friends far away; of my old home among the Mendip hills; of Bessie Robinson, who had promised to become my wife when I went back after this voyage; of a thousand hopes and projects, far enough removed from the schooner *Mary-Jane*, or any soul on board. From these dreams I was suddenly roused by the voice of Joshua Dunn shouting in a quick, startled tone — "Ship ahoy!"

I was alive in a moment at this cry, for we were at war with both France and Spain at the time, and it would have been no pleasant matter to fall in with an enemy; especially as there had been some fierce fights more than once in these very waters since the war began. So I pulled up in my walk, looked sharply round on all sides, and saw nothing but fog.

"Whereabouts, Josh?" I cried.

"Coming right up, sir, under our weather-bow," replied the steersman.

I stepped aft, and, staring steadily in the direction indicated, saw, sure enough, the faint glimmer of a couple of lanthorns, coming up through the fog. To dash down into my cabin, seize a brace of pistols and my speaking-trumpet, and spring up again on deck, just as the spectral outline of a large brig loomed up almost within a stone's throw of the ship's side, was the work of a moment. I then stood silent, and waited, ready to answer if hailed, and willing enough to slip along unobserved in the fog, if our

a pocket-compass, tinder-box, hatchet, and small telescope. I then took a slip of parchment, and having written upon it the name and destination of the *Mary-Jane*, together with the date of the year and month, and my own signature as her captain, enclosed the whole in a stout glass bottle, sealed it down with my own seal, and stowed it away in the boat with the rest of the stores. This bottle, and a small union-jack which I tied round my waist like a sash, were destined to be hoisted on the mountain top as soon as we succeeded in climbing up to it.

My preparations for landing were but just completed, when the mate sung out, "Breakers ahead!" I ran at once on deck. The fog had grown denser than ever. There was no land in sight, though I knew we must be within a mile of the shore. Not even the breakers were visible, but we could hear the roaring of them quite distinctly. I gave orders to lay to immediately; and, taking Taylor aside, told him that it was my intention to go ashore in the boat without a moment's delay. He flung up his hands and implored me not to venture.

"I swear to you, sir," said he, emphatically, "that's there's no land within four hundred miles of us on any side. These are coral reefs; and to take a boat amongst them in this fog is to rush on certain destruction. For Heaven's sake, sir, stay aboard, at least, till the fog clears off!"

But I only laughed, and refused to listen to him.

"There's land, mate," said I, "within a mile. I saw it with my own eyes not two hours ago; and

"Will you show it?"

"Ay, ay. Come aboard, and see."

I bade the steersman lay to. The stranger did the same. Presently her great hull towered up beside us like a huge rock; a rope was thrown; a chain ladder lowered; and I stepped on deck. I looked round for the captain. A tall, gaunt man stood before me, with his belt full of pistols, and a speaking-trumpet under his arm. Beside him stood a sailor with a torch, the light from which flickered redly through the thick air, and showed some twenty men, or more, gathered round the binnacle. All were as silent as ghosts, and, seen through the mist, looked as unsubstantial.

The captain put his hand to his hat, looked at me with eyes that glittered like live coals, and said: —

"You want to see the chart of the islands?"

"I do, sir."

"Follow me."

The sailor lighted us down, the captain went first, and I followed. As I passed down the cabin-stairs I eased the pistols in my belt, ready for use if necessary; for there was something strange about the captain and his crew — something strange in the very build and aspect of the ship, that puzzled me, and put me on my guard.

The captain's cabin was large, low, and gloomy, lighted by an oil-lamp swinging from the roof, like a murderer swinging in chains; fitted with old carved furniture that might have been oak, but was as black as ebony; and plentifully garnished about the

"If you're wise," said I, "you'll strike out for the shore, as I shall. In the meanwhile, we had better fill our pockets with biscuit, for fear of accidents."

I then divided the contents of the biscuit-bag, and we stuffed our pockets as full as they could hold. By this time, the noise had so increased that we could scarcely hear each other's voices, and the white foam was already visible through the mist.

"Steady, Josh," cried I, "there are rough seas before us."

The words were scarcely past my lips when we were tossing in the midst of the surf, drenched with spray, and well-nigh deafened by the roaring of the waters. I saw directly that no boat could live in such a whirlpool — ours did not hold out for five minutes. Flung from billow to billow like a mere cockle-shell, she laboured onwards for something like a hundred yards, filled, heeled over, and disappeared suddenly from beneath our feet!

Prepared for this catastrophe, I rose like a cork, glued my arms to my sides, kept my mouth and eyes shut, and suffered the waves to carry me along. Finding, however, that instead of bearing me towards the shore, they only dashed me hither and thither among the breakers, I presently gave up all hope of floating in, and, being an excellent swimmer, struck out for land. Blinded, buffeted, breathless, now carried to the summit of a mighty wave, now buried in the very heart of a mountain of green sea, now fighting forward again, in spite of wind and spray, I struggled on with a superhuman

energy that only the love of life and riches could have inspired. Suddenly, my feet touched land — lost it — touched again. I threw all my strength into one last, desperate effort, precipitated myself through the raging foam that broke like a vast barrier all along the shore, and fell, face downwards, on the pebbly beach beyond.

I lay there for some minutes, just within reach of the spray, and beyond the line of the breakers, so utterly spent and stupefied as to be scarcely conscious of the danger from which I had escaped. Recovering, however, by degrees, I rose, looked around, and found myself on a shelving belt of shingle that reached far away on either side till lost in the fog. Beyond the shingle ran a line of low cliffs, along the summits of which, looking dim and distant in the misty air, rose the feathery tops of a far-stretching forest of cocoa-nut palms. Here, then, was the island, palpable, undeniable, actual! I took up a handful of loose pebbles — stamped on the shingle — ran along the beach. In all this there was no illusion. I was awake, sober, in full possession of my senses. All was as it seemed — all tried, and proved, and real.

Passing instantaneously from a state of wonder, half confused, half incredulous, to a wild, unbounded joy, I ran about for some minutes like a maniac — shouting, leaping, clapping my hands, and giving way to the most extravagant demonstrations of triumph. In the midst of this folly, the thought of Josh Dunn flashed across my mind. I grew sober in a moment. What had become of the poor fellow?

I had never seen him from the instant when the boat capsized. Had he swum for the ship, or the shore? Was he saved, or lost? I went backwards and forwards along the beach, dreading to see his corpse washed up by every coming wave, but found no trace of him in any direction. Convinced, at length, that further search was hopeless, I gave it up, and turned my face and footsteps towards the cliffs.

It was now, as nearly as I could calculate, about ten o'clock in the day. The heat was tempered by the fog and the sea-breeze, and I promised myself to reach the mountain-top before sunset. Making straight across the beach to a point where the cliffs looked somewhat lower and more broken than elsewhere, I succeeded in climbing up the face of the rock without much difficulty, and in gaining the skirts of the palm-forest above. Here I flung myself down in the shade, and proceeded to examine the contents of my pockets. The rum, ammunition, and other loose stores were lost with the boat; but I found that I was still in possession of all that I had stowed about my person. One by one, I brought out my tinder-box, telescope, pocket-compass, clasp-knife, and other trifles; all of which (except the compass, which was enclosed in a tight tin case) were more or less damaged by the sea-water. As for the biscuit, it was reduced to a nauseous pulp which I flung away in disgust, preferring to trust to the cocoa-nuts for my subsistence. Of these I saw hundreds clustered overhead; and, being by this time quite ready for breakfast, I climbed the tree

against which I had been lying, brought down three or four nuts, and made a delicious meal. I then unscrewed and cleaned the glasses of my telescope, consulted my compass and prepared to continue my journey. Finding by the position of the needle that the north lay to the right, following the line of shore below, I concluded that I must have swum to land at some point of the eastern extremity of the bay where I had hoped to anchor. This being the case, I had but to march due west in order to arrive at the foot of the mountain, which I proposed to myself as the object of my first day's exploration. Due west I turned accordingly, and, compass in hand, took my way through the green shade of the forest. Here the coolness, the silence, the solitude, were perfect. I could not hear my own footsteps for the moss that carpeted the ground; and though I saw several birds of brilliant plumage, they uttered no kind of note, but sat like painted creatures on the boughs, and looked at me without any sign of fear. Once or twice, I saw a small long-tailed monkey flitting like a squirrel through the uppermost tree-tops; but it was gone in a moment, and seemed only to make the place more wild and solitary. On every side, like graceful columns supporting the roof of some vast temple, rose hundreds of slender palm-stems, ringed with the natural record of their yearly growth; whilst here and there, through openings in the boughs, came glimpses of blue sky and shafts of golden sunlight.

When I had walked thus for about a mile and a half, finding the atmosphere growing clearer and

brighter at every step, I suddenly emerged upon a grassy plain studded with trees like an English park, and traversed by a small winding river that glittered like moving silver in the open sunshine. Beyond this plain, at the distance of about another mile and a half, lay a second forest, more extensive apparently, than the first; and beyond that again, defined so clearly against the deep blue sky that I could almost have believed I might touch it with my hand, rose a steep and rugged peak, clothed half-way up with trees, and surmounted by some kind of building, with a beacon on the top. The height of this peak I calculated at something less than two thousand feet. I recognized it at once as the same which I had sighted from the masthead of the *Mary-Jane* at sunrise that morning. I also recognized the plain and river, each lying in its proper geographical position, according to the chart.

Finding my every hope becoming corroborated as I went on, I now made no question as to the result of my undertaking, but pushed gaily forward, and amused myself by speculating about the treasure. Where should I find it? In what form? Perhaps we should have to mine for it; and in that case I made up my mind to seek all round the island, if necessary, for some safe harbour in which to anchor the *Mary-Jane*. I should then land all my crew, build a few temporary huts, and set the men hard to work at digging and smelting, till our little ship would hold not another ingot. This done, I would sail straight for Jamaica, lodge my treasure in some colonial bank, purchase a large vessel, en-

from the coast of the larger island; whereupon, I yielded to a temptation stronger than my will or my reason, and changed the ship's course.

That decisive step once taken, I fell into a state of feverish eagerness, which allowed me no rest of body or mind. I could neither sleep, nor eat, nor sit still, nor remain in one spot for three minutes together. I went up to the masthead twenty times a day on the look-out for land; and raged against the fog, as if it were sent from heaven on purpose to torment me. My seamen thought I was mad; and so I was. Mad with the thirst of gain, as many a sane man has been before and since.

At length, on the morning of the third day, Aaron Taylor came to me in my cabin, and ventured on a respectful remonstrance. We had already deviated, he said, two degrees from our course, and were making straight for the Bahama islands, instead of for Jamaica. Had we kept steadily on our way, we should have shortly touched at Porto Rico for provisions and water; but both were running short, and could not possibly hold out for anything like the time it would take us to make land in the present direction. In reply to this statement, I showed my chart with the two islands sketched in according to their bearings.

He looked at them, shook his head, and said very earnestly: —

"I have sailed in these latitudes for the last fifteen years, your honour, and I'll take my Bible oath there are no such islands."

Whereupon I flew into a violent fit of anger, as

if the mate had presumed to doubt my word, and forbade him ever to speak to me on the subject again. My temper, in short, was as much impaired as my peace of mind, or, indeed, as my sense of duty; and gold, accursed gold, was at the bottom of it all!

Thus the third day passed on, and still the fog hung round and seemed to follow us. The seamen did their work sullenly, and whispered together when my back was turned. The mate looked pale and grave, like a man whose mind was full of anxious thoughts. For my part, I was more resolute than ever, and silently vowed to shoot the first sailor who showed a sign of mutiny. To this end I cleaned and primed my pistols, and hid a Spanish dagger between my waistcoat and my belt. Thus the long, monotonous hours went on, and the sun sank, and yet no land, nor indication of land, had appeared on any side.

Sixty-five hours out of the seventy-two had now gone by, and it seemed as if the remaining seven would never expire. To sleep was impossible; so I paced the deck all night, and watched as eagerly for the first gleam of dawn as if my life depended on it. As the morning drew nearer, my excitement became almost more than I could bear. I even felt as if I would gladly have put off the moment which I had been so passionately awaiting.

At length the eastward grey grew visibly lighter, and was followed by a broad crimson flush all across the heavens. I went up aloft, trembling in every limb. As I reached the top-gallant-mast, the sun

unable to distinguish any kind of entrance, I concluded that it was a tomb. Then came another domed temple, the roof of which was plated with what looked like sheets of solid gold; then a vast number of tombs all together, some of white, some of red, and some of green marble; then a hillocky space of undistinguishable *débris;* then an obelisk inlaid with various kinds of jasper and onyx; and then, partly built up against, and partly excavated in, the rocky base of the central peak, close beneath which I was now standing, a building of grander dimensions than any I had yet seen. The front, defaced as it was, rose to a clear height of at least three hundred feet. The great entrance was supported on either side by a colossal stone image, half man, half eagle, which, though buried in rubbish half way to the knees, yet stood full fifty feet clear in sight. From the middle of the roof rose a kind of low, broad pyramid, fantastically ornamented in gold and colours.

In this temple, I felt sure I should find treasure. My only difficulty would be to force an entrance. The great portals were literally blocked up by a mass of broken sculpture, that seemed to have fallen from the façade immediately above the entrance. Over and among the rubbish and *débris* had grown a tangled mass of underwood, trailing plants, and huge prickly growths of the cactus tribe. The hand of man could scarcely have barricaded the approach to the sanctuary of his gods more effectually than time and decay had done.

With only a pocket-knife, I knew that it would

be hopeless to attempt to cut my way through such a jungle; I therefore left the front, and made a survey of the temple from the sides where it projected from the face of the rock. Even this was no easy matter, for the area all about it was strewn with great mounds of bush-grown rubbish, over which I had to climb as I best could, without heeding how my hands and face were wounded in the effort. All this time I could see no sign of any openings or windows, by which the building could have been lighted, or any other doorway than the great entrance on the other side.

At length it occurred to me that I might find some means of penetrating to the interior of the building by climbing that part of the mountain against which it was reared, and finding some way of dropping down upon the roof. So I went on a little farther, to a point where the ascent looked somewhat less difficult than elsewhere, and succeeded in clambering up to a ledge that commanded the roof of the temple. It lay before me like a vast terrace, with the pyramid in the midst. Comparatively free from the rubble that strewed every foot of the ground below, it was only grass-grown and mossy, with a few young trees and bushes springing up here and there where the dust of ages had deposited sufficient nourishment for their roots. I sprang down upon it, and proceeded to reconnoitre the surface from end to end, taking good care, all the while, lest I should step on some weak spot, and be precipitated into the chasm below. It was well that I did so. Having gone half-way along from

the back towards the front, and left the pyramid a few feet behind me, I came suddenly upon what seemed like a great pit, over the edges of which the bushes clung suspended, and linked their tangled boughs together, as if they feared to fall. I drew back startled, for another step would have carried me over. I peered in — all below was dark and unfathomable. I traced the boundaries of the pit, and found that it was an oblong parallelogram, constructed evidently for the purpose of giving light to the interior. Here, then, was an unobstructed opening into the building, but one of which it would be impossible to avail myself without the aid of a ladder. I tore away a bush that grew at the verge of the chasm, and, flinging myself down at full length, shaded my eyes with one hand, and looked into the abyss below. For some minutes I could see nothing — all seemed intensely dark, like the crater of an extinct volcano. At length, one dim outline after another became faintly visible. I distinguished mounds of stones and rubbish, which had probably fallen from the inside of the ceiling, and the lower limbs of another colossal figure, the upper part of which I could only have seen by descending into the building. It was in vain that I leaned over till another inch would have caused me to lose my balance. It was in vain that I tested the strength of every bush and creeper all round the opening. This was all that I had gained, or could hope to gain, in return for my labour in mounting there.

I rose at last, slowly and reluctantly, and paused to think what it was best for me next to do. The

city lay at my feet — the mountain rose high above my head. At the level on which I now stood, and for some distance higher up the mountain-side, were scattered several more of those small buildings which I had concluded must be places of sepulture. Should I examine these, in the hope of finding some access to the probable treasures buried with the dust of their inmates? or should I pursue my first design of ascending the peak, planting the English flag on the summit, and beginning my explorations with a thorough observation of the whole city and surrounding country? I did not waste much time in hesitation. I felt as yet almost unwearied, despite my exertions and my long night's watch; and I decided for the ascent.

It was a difficult task, and needed all the energy and perseverance of which I was master.

The first two hundred yards or so, where the slope was less abrupt, and the terraces were covered with buildings, were comparatively easy; and here I could not resist turning aside for a few minutes, to examine a tomb which seemed to be more dilapidated than any which I had yet encountered. As I drew nearer, I found that it bore every mark of having been broken open at some not very distant time. It was a simple square building of white marble, with a dome-shaped roof. This roof had evidently received several blows from some sharp instrument, and was cracked and chipped in many places. A large portion of the masonry at one end had also been removed, and piled back against the spot where it had been broken open.

An irresistible curiosity impelled me to displace the stones again, and see the inside of the chamber. The blocks were ponderous, and I dragged them out with difficulty. As I did so, one rolled down the slope, and fell crashing through the bushes, a hundred and fifty feet below, whereupon a number of gorgeous birds rose screaming into the air, and flapped heavily away.

"What a fool I am!" I said aloud, as I wiped the perspiration from my brow, and paused to rest; "what a fool I am to exhaust myself thus, when others have been before me, and have, no doubt, rifled the place of anything that might have been valuable! Well, never mind; those others have, at all events, done the worst of the work, and I may as well see whether it was really a tomb, and whether the rest of them are likely to be worth our trouble hereafter."

So I went on again with a will, and found to my satisfaction, that when the three or four large marble blocks were fairly rolled away, only small stones and rubble remained. These were rapidly cleared out, and in about another quarter of an hour I had succeeded in making a space large enough to enable me to creep in. Having done so, and found that I could stand upright inside the building, I waited till my eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness. Gradually, as before, one object and then another became visible, and I found that the place was beyond all doubt a sepulchre.

The inner chamber measured about six feet by

I had never seen him from the instant when the boat capsized. Had he swum for the ship, or the shore? Was he saved, or lost? I went backwards and forwards along the beach, dreading to see his corpse washed up by every coming wave, but found no trace of him in any direction. Convinced, at length, that further search was hopeless, I gave it up, and turned my face and footsteps towards the cliffs.

It was now, as nearly as I could calculate, about ten o'clock in the day. The heat was tempered by the fog and the sea-breeze, and I promised myself to reach the mountain-top before sunset. Making straight across the beach to a point where the cliffs looked somewhat lower and more broken than elsewhere, I succeeded in climbing up the face of the rock without much difficulty, and in gaining the skirts of the palm-forest above. Here I flung myself down in the shade, and proceeded to examine the contents of my pockets. The rum, ammunition, and other loose stores were lost with the boat; but I found that I was still in possession of all that I had stowed about my person. One by one, I brought out my tinder-box, telescope, pocket-compass, clasp-knife, and other trifles; all of which (except the compass, which was enclosed in a tight tin case) were more or less damaged by the sea-water. As for the biscuit, it was reduced to a nauseous pulp which I flung away in disgust, preferring to trust to the cocoa-nuts for my subsistence. Of these I saw hundreds clustered overhead; and, being by this time quite ready for breakfast, I climbed the tree

tured to myself temples with costly altars, and sacrificial vessels of gold and silver — palaces with unexplored apartments, containing thrones, and royal furniture, and weapons studded with precious stones — tombs filled with gorgeous ornaments of buried kings. Aladdin's garden of jewels was not more lavish of wonder than became now to me the ruins of this forgotten city. Then came the bewildering thought that all the riches of this vanished race were mine. The island was unclaimed, uninhabited, unpossessed. It was mine to explore, to ransack, to plunder at my pleasure.

I crept out of the tomb and exultingly breathed the fresh air again. I looked up at the great peak, which I could hardly be said to have even begun to ascend. The sun seemed as yet scarcely to have moved in the heavens, and the glorious day was still at its zenith. I sat down for a few moments to rest, and refreshed my parching throat with a few delicious purple berries that grew upon the bushes close beside me. Then I took out my pearl and examined it again in the open daylight. The sight seemed to stimulate me — I rose, replaced it in the box, and resumed my task.

In a few minutes, I had left the last terrace and the last tomb below my feet, and had entered upon that part of the ascent where the rock grew steeper and was overgrown with thorny underwood, through which I had to force a passage as I could. I did force it, however, though my hands and face bled for it, and my clothes were well-nigh torn to pieces on my back. Panting and exhausted, I at length

fought through the belt of brush-wood and emerged upon the bare rock above.

Hence the barren peak rose, steep and sheer, some twelve hundred feet above my head. At the sight of these awful precipices, my heart sunk within me. There was no visible footing for even a goat, as far as I could see; and scarce a twig, or blade of grass, for the climber to hold by. Thinking that it might possibly be less steep elsewhere, I contrived to work my way round more to the westward, and there, sure enough, found the commencement of what seemed like a gigantic staircase, hewn roughly out from the very substance of the rock. Each step of this ascent was from three to four feet in height. Some were cut in deep shelves, on which three or four persons could have lain down at length; others were so narrow as scarcely to afford space for the foot; and many were quite broken away, which tenfold increased the difficulty of climbing. By the help, however, of perseverance, great natural agility, a cool head, and a resolute will, I sprang, clambered, and swung myself, somehow or another, from shelf to shelf of this perilous staircase, only pausing now and then to rest, and look down at the widening landscape. At length I found my feet on the last step, and the summit, which had hitherto been hidden by the impending precipices, close above my head.

That summit was artificially heightened by a kind of shelving platform, like a pyramid with the apex cut away. On the top of this platform stood

against which I had been lying, brought down three or four nuts, and made a delicious meal. I then unscrewed and cleaned the glasses of my telescope, consulted my compass and prepared to continue my journey. Finding by the position of the needle that the north lay to the right, following the line of shore below, I concluded that I must have swum to land at some point of the eastern extremity of the bay where I had hoped to anchor. This being the case, I had but to march due west in order to arrive at the foot of the mountain, which I proposed to myself as the object of my first day's exploration. Due west I turned accordingly, and, compass in hand, took my way through the green shade of the forest. Here the coolness, the silence, the solitude, were perfect. I could not hear my own footsteps for the moss that carpeted the ground; and though I saw several birds of brilliant plumage, they uttered no kind of note, but sat like painted creatures on the boughs, and looked at me without any sign of fear. Once or twice, I saw a small long-tailed monkey flitting like a squirrel through the uppermost tree-tops; but it was gone in a moment, and seemed only to make the place more wild and solitary. On every side, like graceful columns supporting the roof of some vast temple, rose hundreds of slender palm-stems, ringed with the natural record of their yearly growth; whilst here and there, through openings in the boughs, came glimpses of blue sky and shafts of golden sunlight.

When I had walked thus for about a mile and a half, finding the atmosphere growing clearer and

estimable diamond, such as the world had never seen before!

It was almost spherical in shape, though slightly flattened, like the globe, at the two poles; was cut all over in the smallest facets, each of which reflected every colour of the prism; and measured just twenty-two inches and a half in circumference.

When I had in some degree recovered from the state of excitement and wonder into which this great discovery had thrown me, and was cool enough to look down at the scene below, I saw the whole island at my feet, as if drawn out upon a map.

The smaller island lay close by, to the north-west, separated from this one by a strait of about two miles in width; and all around and about, from the verge of the beach below to the farthest limit of the horizon, stretched one rippling, sparkling, brilliant expanse of sapphire sea, unclouded by a breath of vapour, and unbroken by a single sail. I looked for the *Mary-Jane;* but she was hidden by the cliffs that bounded the eastward coast in the direction where I landed. Then I took out my glass, and made a careful observation of both islands. Scattered up and down the hills of the farther one, I saw the remains of various domed and pyramidal buildings, most of which appeared to be plated on the roofs and sides with gold, and glittered to the sun. Beneath my feet, reaching over a much greater extent of ground than I had at first supposed, lay the ruins of a vast number of palaces, temples, tombs, and triumphal arches; many of which, especially to the west side of the island,

which I had not before seen, were in a high state of preservation, and richly decorated with gilding, painting, sculpture, and precious metals. In all of them, no doubt, were idols made after the pattern of this on which I was perched so unceremoniously, and treasure of every imaginable description.

However, the present and actual were all that concerned me just then; so I left the investigation of the ruins till such time as I could bring my men to help me, and set to work with my clasp-knife, to secure as much as possible of the spoil within my grasp. My first attack was made of course upon the diamond, which I dislodged with infinite difficulty, it being "set" into the head of the idol with some kind of very hard cement, that I had to grate to powder as I went on. When, at last, I had quite freed it, I tied it up in the union-jack which had been all this time about my waist, and let myself down upon the east side of the building, where I had seen an opening into the basement. Looking inside this opening, I found the whole interior filled with human skulls; which somewhat startled me. I made room among them, however, for my diamond, and then climbed up again to secure a few more stones. This time I fell upon the idol's eyes and ear-rings, which I soon transferred to my own pockets; and, having knocked out some of the great emeralds from his belt, and one or two of the largest opals from his bangles and bracelets, and taken possession of his golden scimitar for my own use, I made up my mind to rest from my labours for this day, and go back by the way I had come. So I

tied the loose stones up with the diamond, secured the bundle to my belt, buckled the scimitar to my side, and prepared to descend the mountain. Loaded as I was now, however, this proved no easy matter; but I got to the bottom at last, after some perilous falls and scrambles; took the same route through the ruins, scaled the outer line of wall as before, and plunged into the forest.

The sun was low in the heavens, and I was thoroughly exhausted by the mental and physical exertions of the day. I doubted whether it would be possible for me to reach the coast before sunset; and I stood in great need of food and rest. The shade and silence of the woods — the springy moss, offering a natural carpet to my feet — the cocoa-nuts and fragrant berries all around, were temptations not to be resisted; so I decided to spend the night in the forest, and proceeded to choose my lodging. A snug bank at the foot of a clump of banana and cocoa trees was soon found; and here, with a pile of cocoa-nuts by my side, my precious bundle at my feet, and my scimitar lying ready to my hand, I lay down, ate a hearty supper, and settled myself for the night.

The sun went down upon the silence of the forest. Not a bird twittered — not a monkey chattered — not an insect hummed near. Then came darkness and the southern stars; and I fell into a profound sleep.

I awoke next morning with the dawn; breakfasted on a cocoa-nut, drank the milk of two or three others; and set off, compass in hand, towards

the back towards the front, and left the pyramid a few feet behind me, I came suddenly upon what seemed like a great pit, over the edges of which the bushes clung suspended, and linked their tangled boughs together, as if they feared to fall. I drew back startled, for another step would have carried me over. I peered in — all below was dark and unfathomable. I traced the boundaries of the pit, and found that it was an oblong parallelogram, constructed evidently for the purpose of giving light to the interior. Here, then, was an unobstructed opening into the building, but one of which it would be impossible to avail myself without the aid of a ladder. I tore away a bush that grew at the verge of the chasm, and, flinging myself down at full length, shaded my eyes with one hand, and looked into the abyss below. For some minutes I could see nothing — all seemed intensely dark, like the crater of an extinct volcano. At length, one dim outline after another became faintly visible. I distinguished mounds of stones and rubbish, which had probably fallen from the inside of the ceiling, and the lower limbs of another colossal figure, the upper part of which I could only have seen by descending into the building. It was in vain that I leaned over till another inch would have caused me to lose my balance. It was in vain that I tested the strength of every bush and creeper all round the opening. This was all that I had gained, or could hope to gain, in return for my labour in mounting there.

I rose at last, slowly and reluctantly, and paused to think what it was best for me next to do. The

city lay at my feet — the mountain rose high above my head. At the level on which I now stood, and for some distance higher up the mountain-side, were scattered several more of those small buildings which I had concluded must be places of sepulture. Should I examine these, in the hope of finding some access to the probable treasures buried with the dust of their inmates? or should I pursue my first design of ascending the peak, planting the English flag on the summit, and beginning my explorations with a thorough observation of the whole city and surrounding country? I did not waste much time in hesitation. I felt as yet almost unwearied, despite my exertions and my long night's watch; and I decided for the ascent.

It was a difficult task, and needed all the energy and perseverance of which I was master.

The first two hundred yards or so, where the slope was less abrupt, and the terraces were covered with buildings, were comparatively easy; and here I could not resist turning aside for a few minutes, to examine a tomb which seemed to be more dilapidated than any which I had yet encountered. As I drew nearer, I found that it bore every mark of having been broken open at some not very distant time. It was a simple square building of white marble, with a dome-shaped roof. This roof had evidently received several blows from some sharp instrument, and was cracked and chipped in many places. A large portion of the masonry at one end had also been removed, and piled back against the spot where it had been broken open.

An irresistible curiosity impelled me to displace the stones again, and see the inside of the chamber. The blocks were ponderous, and I dragged them out with difficulty. As I did so, one rolled down the slope, and fell crashing through the bushes, a hundred and fifty feet below, whereupon a number of gorgeous birds rose screaming into the air, and flapped heavily away.

"What a fool I am!" I said aloud, as I wiped the perspiration from my brow, and paused to rest; "what a fool I am to exhaust myself thus, when others have been before me, and have, no doubt, rifled the place of anything that might have been valuable! Well, never mind; those others have, at all events, done the worst of the work, and I may as well see whether it was really a tomb, and whether the rest of them are likely to be worth our trouble hereafter."

So I went on again with a will, and found to my satisfaction, that when the three or four large marble blocks were fairly rolled away, only small stones and rubble remained. These were rapidly cleared out, and in about another quarter of an hour I had succeeded in making a space large enough to enable me to creep in. Having done so, and found that I could stand upright inside the building, I waited till my eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness. Gradually, as before, one object and then another became visible, and I found that the place was beyond all doubt a sepulchre.

The inner chamber measured about six feet by

ten, and was closed in by a ceiling, about three inches above my head. The walls were lined with slabs of the purest alabaster, engraved all over with strange characters. The ceiling was rudely painted with representations of birds, fishes, plants, and beings half human and half brute. Some broken urns of dark blue pottery lay scattered about the floor, and at the farther end of the chamber, on a raised shelf of plain white marble, stood an alabaster coffer, the lid of which, shattered in a dozen fragments, lay close by. It was too dark for me to see to the bottom of this coffer, but I put my hand in, and found it, as I had expected, empty. Just as I was withdrawing my fingers, however, they encountered a small object that felt like a pea. I seized and brought it to light. It was a fine pearl, somewhat discoloured by the damp, but as large as an ordinary holly-berry.

This discovery made my heart leap for joy, and rewarded me for all the trouble I had given myself to break into this tomb. The pearl itself was probably of no great value, but it was an earnest of what I might hope to find in those tombs which as yet had never been disturbed by previous adventurers. I put it inside my tinder-box for safety, and promised myself the pleasure of displaying it to the crew of the *Mary-Jane*, in proof of the booty that awaited us.

"If there is treasure in the tombs," thought I, exultingly, "what may we not hope to find in the temples and palaces?"

My head swam with visions of wealth. I pic-

I gathered the papers together from the table drawers, and staggered up on deck with them like a drunken man. There I sat down, stupefied, not knowing what to think or do. A frightful gulf seemed to lie between me and the past. Yesterday I was young — yesterday I left my ship, with hope in my heart, and brown locks upon my head; to-day, I am a middle-aged man — to-day, I find my ship rotting on a desolate beach, the hair white upon my brow, and the future all a blank! Mechanically I untied one of the packets of letters. The outer ones were so discoloured that no writing remained visible upon them. They were mere folds of damp brown tinder, and fell to shreds as I unfolded them. Only two, which lay protected in the middle of the packet, were yet legible. I opened them. One was from my mother, the other from Bessie Robinson. I remembered so well when I read them last. It was the evening before that misty night when I met the *Adventure* with her cargo of gold and jewels. Fatal night! Accursed ship! Accursed, and thrice accursed wealth, that had tempted me from my duty, and dragged me to destruction!

I read the letters through — at least, all that was legible of them — and my tears fell fast the while. When I had read them a second time, I fell upon my knees and prayed to God to deliver me. After this, I felt somewhat calmer, and having laid the papers carefully aside, began to think what I should do to escape from my captivity.

My first thought was of my crew. The men would seem to have abandoned the *Mary-Jane*.

Everything on board, so far as I could perceive, though rotting away, was untouched. There were no signs of plunder; neither had they taken the ship's last boat, in any attempt to put to sea on their own account. I looked down into the hold, and saw the great packing-cases lying half under water apparently undisturbed since the hour when I left the vessel. Surely, then, the men must have landed and gone up the island. In that case, where were they? How long had they been gone? What time had gone by since we parted? Was it possible that they could be all lost — or dead? Was I absolutely and utterly alone in this unknown island: and was it my fate to live and die here, like a dog? Alas! alas! of what use were diamonds and gold to me, if this were the price at which I was to purchase them?

With these bitter reflections pressing on my mind, I roused myself by a great effort, and resolved that my first step should be to institute a thorough search for my men along the coast. In order to do this, it was necessary that I should find myself some place of temporary habitation, either in the wreck or on the shore, to which I could retire at night. Also that I should lay up a store of provisions for my daily use. I likewise determined to set up some kind of signals, here and there, along the cliffs, to guide the men to me, if they were yet wandering about the island. My bundle of jewels, too, needed to be placed in a secure spot, lest any strange ship should find its way into the bay, and other treasure-seekers lay hands upon it. I looked round about

me at the rotting timbers and the leaky cabin, and shuddered at the notion of passing a night on board the *Mary-Jane*. The ship looked as if it must be phantom-haunted. It was, at all events, too remarkable an object to be a secure storehouse for my treasures, in case of the arrival of strangers. It was the first place they would ransack. Altogether, I felt it would be safer and pleasanter to stow myself and my jewels in some cavern along the cliffs. I had seen plenty on my way, and I determined to set off at once in search of what I wanted. So I went down again into the cabin to look for some weapon to carry with me, and having found a rusty marling-spike and cutlass still hanging where I had left them behind the door, thrust them into my belt, slung my bundle over my shoulder, let myself down over the ship's side, and started for a walk under the cliffs. I had not gone far before I found just the spot I wanted. It was a deep cavern, about three feet above the level of the beach, the mouth of which was almost hidden by an angle of rock, and was quite invisible from some little distance. The inside of the cave was smooth, and carpeted with soft white sand. The walls were dry, and tapestried here and there with velvety lichens. In short, it was precisely such a retreat as best accorded with my present purposes. I took possession of it at once, by stowing away my bundle of jewels on a sort of natural shelf at the remotest end of the cave. I then traced a great cross in the sand before the entrance, that I might find my lodging again without difficulty, and went out to

seek something in the shape of food and firewood.

The first easy path up the face of the cliffs brought me to the outskirts of the palm forests. I climbed the nearest tree, and flung down about twenty nuts. They were by no means such fine nuts as those farther in amid the woods; but I had taken a kind of superstitious horror of the interior of the island, and had no mind now to venture one step farther than was necessary. I then carried my nuts to the edge of the cliff, and rolled them over. By these means, I saved myself the labour of carrying them down, and had only to pick them up from the beach, and store them in the cave, close under the shelf where I had hidden my jewels. By this time, in spite of my trouble, I was very hungry; but the sun was bending westward, and I was anxious to make another excursion to the ship before nightfall; so I promised myself that I would dine and sup together by-and-by, and so proceeded once more in the direction of the *Mary-Jane*.

What I wanted now was, if it were possible to find them, a couple of blankets, a hatchet to break up my cocoa-nuts, a bottle of some kind of spirits, and a piece of tarpauling to hang at night before the entrance to my cavern. I hauled myself up again by the cable-chain, and went down into the cabin. I found my bed a mere shelf-ful of rotten rags. If I hoped to find blankets anywhere, it must be among the ship's stores, in some place more protected from the damp. I forced open the locker in which I used to keep spirits. Here I was fortunate

a massive square building of white marble, with a large open entrance looking east; and this building served in turn as the pedestal to a gigantic idol, which sat, cross-legged and hideous, with its face to the setting sun. Sitting as it was, the image measured at least twenty feet in height, and wore on its head a large ornament of some strange and dazzling substance, which almost blinded me, at first, by its intolerable splendour. When I had somewhat recovered the command of my sight, I went nearer and examined it. To my amazement, I found this idol to be one incrustation of precious stones, from head to foot. The body was carved in jasper; the legs and arms in red onyx; the hands, feet, and face in the purest alabaster. Round its neck, inlaid upon the surface of the jasper ground, ran a rich collar of turquoises and garnets; round its waist a belt of great emeralds; round its ankles, wrists, arms, and knees, elaborate bands of amethysts and opals. Each eye was represented by a ruby as large as a crown piece. From its ears hung enormous pendants of the purest sapphires, each the size of an ordinary hen's egg, and richly mounted in gold. Across its knees lay a golden scimitar, the hilt of which was carved from a single beryl; while on its head .... I stared — rubbed my eyes, as if to be sure I was not dreaming — scaled the walls of the building — climbed the shoulders of the idol — examined it from every side — and came at last to the conclusion that this ornament, which I had taken for a beacon far away at sea, was no other thing than one pure, gigantic, in-

estimable diamond, such as the world had never seen before!

It was almost spherical in shape, though slightly flattened, like the globe, at the two poles; was cut all over in the smallest facets, each of which reflected every colour of the prism; and measured just twenty-two inches and a half in circumference.

When I had in some degree recovered from the state of excitement and wonder into which this great discovery had thrown me, and was cool enough to look down at the scene below, I saw the whole island at my feet, as if drawn out upon a map.

The smaller island lay close by, to the north-west, separated from this one by a strait of about two miles in width; and all around and about, from the verge of the beach below to the farthest limit of the horizon, stretched one rippling, sparkling, brilliant expanse of sapphire sea, unclouded by a breath of vapour, and unbroken by a single sail. I looked for the *Mary-Jane;* but she was hidden by the cliffs that bounded the eastward coast in the direction where I landed. Then I took out my glass, and made a careful observation of both islands. Scattered up and down the hills of the farther one, I saw the remains of various domed and pyramidal buildings, most of which appeared to be plated on the roofs and sides with gold, and glittered to the sun. Beneath my feet, reaching over a much greater extent of ground than I had at first supposed, lay the ruins of a vast number of palaces, temples, tombs, and triumphal arches; many of which, especially to the west side of the island,

which I had not before seen, were in a high state of preservation, and richly decorated with gilding, painting, sculpture, and precious metals. In all of them, no doubt, were idols made after the pattern of this on which I was perched so unceremoniously, and treasure of every imaginable description.

However, the present and actual were all that concerned me just then; so I left the investigation of the ruins till such time as I could bring my men to help me, and set to work with my clasp-knife, to secure as much as possible of the spoil within my grasp. My first attack was made of course upon the diamond, which I dislodged with infinite difficulty, it being "set" into the head of the idol with some kind of very hard cement, that I had to grate to powder as I went on. When, at last, I had quite freed it, I tied it up in the union-jack which had been all this time about my waist, and let myself down upon the east side of the building, where I had seen an opening into the basement. Looking inside this opening, I found the whole interior filled with human skulls; which somewhat startled me. I made room among them, however, for my diamond, and then climbed up again to secure a few more stones. This time I fell upon the idol's eyes and ear-rings, which I soon transferred to my own pockets; and, having knocked out some of the great emeralds from his belt, and one or two of the largest opals from his bangles and bracelets, and taken possession of his golden scimitar for my own use, I made up my mind to rest from my labours for this day, and go back by the way I had come. So I

tied the loose stones up with the diamond, secured the bundle to my belt, buckled the scimitar to my side, and prepared to descend the mountain. Loaded as I was now, however, this proved no easy matter; but I got to the bottom at last, after some perilous falls and scrambles; took the same route through the ruins, scaled the outer line of wall as before, and plunged into the forest.

The sun was low in the heavens, and I was thoroughly exhausted by the mental and physical exertions of the day. I doubted whether it would be possible for me to reach the coast before sunset; and I stood in great need of food and rest. The shade and silence of the woods — the springy moss, offering a natural carpet to my feet — the cocoa-nuts and fragrant berries all around, were temptations not to be resisted; so I decided to spend the night in the forest, and proceeded to choose my lodging. A snug bank at the foot of a clump of banana and cocoa trees was soon found; and here, with a pile of cocoa-nuts by my side, my precious bundle at my feet, and my scimitar lying ready to my hand, I lay down, ate a hearty supper, and settled myself for the night.

The sun went down upon the silence of the forest. Not a bird twittered — not a monkey chattered — not an insect hummed near. Then came darkness and the southern stars; and I fell into a profound sleep.

I awoke next morning with the dawn; breakfasted on a cocoa-nut, drank the milk of two or three others; and set off, compass in hand, towards

could find, for my daily food. This made me somewhat anxious for the future; for I foresaw that if the palm forests were to fail me for many days together, I should be obliged to give up my design, and return home with my doubts yet unresolved. However, I made up my mind to persevere as long as possible; and, having walked till nearly nightfall, supped on such fare as I could pick up from the beach and the bushes, and slept in the open air, with only the deep grass for my couch and the stars for my canopy.

On the fourth day I pursued the same course, with the savannah still bordering the shore, and on the fifth had the satisfaction of finding the palms, and some other trees, again fringing the beach; sometimes in clumps or plantations; sometimes scattered here and there on rising knolls, like the trees in a well-arranged English park. Among these, to my great joy and refreshment, I found several fine bread-trees and some wild sugar canes; and, towards afternoon, came upon a delicious spring of fresh water, which bubbled up from the midst of a natural reservoir, and flowed away among the deep grasses in a little channel almost hidden by flowers and wild plants. In this charming spot I determined to stay for the remainder of the day; for I was weary, and in need of repose. So I lay down beside the spring; feasted on bread fruit and sugar-cane juice; bathed my face and hands, in the cool spring; and enjoyed some hours of delicious rest. At nightfall I crept into a little nook amid a clump of spreading trees, and slept profoundly.

The next morning I awoke, as usual, with the

sunrise. I had been thinking the evening before that this would be the pleasantest spot in which to pitch my tent for the summer, should nothing more hopeful turn up; and I now resolved, before resuming my journey, to reconnoitre the little oasis, and fix upon some site where I might command a good view of the sea, and yet enjoy the benefits of the trees and the grass. A green hill, surmounted by a crown of palms and other trees, and lying about half a mile from the water-line, looked as if it might exactly present the advantages I sought. I went up to it, in the clear, cool air of the early morning, brushing the dew from the grass as I strode along, and feeling quite reinvigorated by my night's rest. As I mounted the little hill, a new prospect began opening before me, and I saw, what I had not suspected while on the level below, that the savannah was surrounded on three sides by the sea, and that by crossing it in a direct line I should save some miles of coasting. A little reflection led me, consequently, to the conclusion that I had now reached the most northerly part of the island, according to the chart, and that from the summit of the hill I should probably come in sight of the smaller island.

Absorbed in these thoughts, I reached the top almost before I was aware of it, and was proceeding to make my way through the trees in search of the view on the other side, when something close by, reared against the stems of three palms which grew near together in a little angle, attracted my attention. I advanced — hesitated — rushed for-

ward. My eyes had not deceived me — it was a hut!

At first, I was so agitated that I had to lean against a tree for support. When I had somewhat recovered my composure, and came to examine the outside of the hut with attention, I saw that it was utterly dilapidated, and bore every mark of having been deserted for a long time. The sides were made of wattled twigs and clay, and the roof, which had partly fallen in, of canes, palm-leaves, and interwoven branches. On the turf outside were the remains of a blackened circle, as if large fires had been kindled there; and in the midst of the circle lay some smooth stones, which might have once served the purposes of an oven. Close by, at the foot of a large bread-tree, about half-way between the hut and the spot where I was standing, rose two grassy mounds of about six feet each in length and two feet in width — just such mounds as may be seen in the corner appropriated to the poor in any English country churchyard. At the sight of these graves — for graves I felt they were — my heart sank within me. I went up to the low arch which served as an entrance to the hut. It was partially closed from the inside by a couple of rotten planks. I removed the planks with a trembling hand, and looked within. All was dark and damp, save where a portion of the roof had fallen in, and hidden the ground beneath. Feverishly, desperately, I began to tear away the wattled walls. I felt that I must penetrate the secret of the place. I knew, as surely as if the hand of God himself had written

it on the earth and sky, that my poor sailors had here found their last resting-places.

Oh, heavens! how shall I describe the scene that met my eyes when I had torn the frail fence from its foundations, and lifted away the roof, that had fallen as if on purpose to hide that melancholy scene from the very stars and sun! A bed of dead leaves and mosses — a human skeleton yet clothed in a few blackened rags — three rusty muskets — a few tin cups, and knives, and such poor necessaries, all thickly coated with red dust — some cocoa shells — a couple of hatchets — a bottle corked and tied over at the mouth, as sailors prepare records for committal to the sea — these were the relics that I found, and the sight of them smote me with a terrible, unutterable conviction of misfortune.

I seized the bottle, staggered away to a distance of some yards from the fatal spot, broke it against the bark of the nearest tree, and found, as I had expected, a written paper inside. For some minutes I had not courage to read it. When, at last, my eyes were less dim, and my hand steadier, I deciphered the following words: —

"August 30th 1761.

"I, Aaron Taylor, mate of the schooner *Mary-Jane*, write these words: — Our captain, William Barlow, left the vessel in the small boat, accompanied by Joshua Dunn, seaman, two hours after daybreak on the 24th of December last, A. D. 1760. The weather was foggy, and the ship lay to within hearing of breakers. The captain left me in charge

of the vessel, with directions to anchor in the bay off which we then lay, and left orders that we were to send an exploring party ashore in case he did not return by the evening of the fourth day. In the course of the 25th (Christmas Day), the fog cleared off, and we found ourselves lying just off the curve of the bay, as our captain had stated. We then anchored according to instructions. The four days went by, and neither the captain nor Joshua Dunn returned. Neither did we see any signs of the boat along that part of the shore against which we lay at anchor. The two seamen who yet remained on board were then despatched by me in the long-boat, to search along the east coast of the island; but they returned at the end of three days without having seen any traces of the captain, the sailor, or the small boat. One of these men, named James Grey, and myself, started again at the end of a few more days of waiting. I left John Cartwright in charge of the vessel, with orders to keep a strict look-out along shore for the captain or Dunn. We landed, hauled our boat up high and dry, and made for the interior of the country, which consisted apparently of nothing but dense forest, in which we wandered for five days without success. Returning in a south-east direction from the northward part of the forest-land, James Grey fell ill with fever, and was unable to get back so far as the boat. I left him on a high spot of ground sheltered by trees, made him a bed of leaves and moss, and went back to the ship for help. When I reached the *Mary-Jane*, I found John Cartwright also sick with fever, though less ill than

Grey. He was able to help in bringing along blankets and other necessaries, and he and I built up this hut together, and laid our dying messmate in it. On the second day from this, Cartwright, who had over-exerted himself while he was already ailing of the same disease, became so much worse that he, too, was unable to get back to the ship, or to do anything but lie down in the hut beside Grey. I did all I could for them, and tried to do my duty by the ship as well as by the men. I went down to the shore every evening to look after the schooner, and went on board every morning; and I nursed the poor fellows as well as I could, by keeping up fires just outside the hut, and supplying them with warm food, warm drinks, and well aired blankets. It was not for me to save them, however. They both died before a fortnight was gone by — James Grey first, and Cartwright a few hours after. I buried them both close against the hut, and returned to the ship, not knowing what better to do, but having very little hope left of ever seeing Captain Barlow or Joshua Dunn in this world again. I was now quite alone, and, as I believed, the last survivor of all the crew. I felt it my duty to remain by the ship, and at anchor in the same spot, till every chance of the captain's return should have gone by. I made up my mind, in short, to stay till the 25th of March, namely, three months from the time when Captain Barlow left the vessel; and then to navigate her into the nearest port. Long before that, however, I began to feel myself ailing. I doctored myself from the captain's medicine-chest; but the drugs

only seemed to make me worse instead of better. I was not taken, however, exactly as Grey and Cartwright were. They fell ill and broke down suddenly — I ailed, and lingered, got better and worse, and dragged on a weary, sickly life from week to week, and from month to month, till not only the three months had gone, but three more to the back of them; and yet I had no strength or power to stir from the spot. I was so weak that I could not have weighed anchor to save my life; and so thin that I could count every bone under my skin. At length, on the night of the 18th of June, there came a tremendous hurricane, which tore the schooner from her moorings, and drove her upon the shore, high and dry — about a hundred yards above the usual high-water mark. I thought she would have been dashed to pieces, and was almost glad to think I should now be rid of my miserable life, and die in the sea at last. But it was God's will that I should not end so. The ship was stranded, and I with her. I now saw my fate before me. I was doomed, anyhow, to live or die on the island. If I recovered, I could never get the *Mary-Jane* to sea again, but must spend all my years alone on the cursed island. This was my bitterest grief. I think it has broken my heart. Since I have been cast ashore, I have grown more and more sickly, and now that I feel I have not many more days to live, I write this narrative of all that has happened since Captain Barlow left the ship, in the hope that it may some day fall into the hands of some Christian seaman who will communicate its contents to my mother and sisters

at Bristol. I have been living up at the hut of late, since the heat set in; and have written this in sight of my messmates' graves. When I have sealed it in a bottle, I shall try to carry it down to the shore, and either leave it on board the *Mary-Jane*, or trust it to the waves. I should like my mother to have my gold watch, and I give my dog Peter, whom I left at home, to my cousin Ellen. If any kind Christian finds this paper, I pray him to bury my bones. God forgive me all my sins. Amen.

"AARON TAYLOR.

"August 30th, 1761."

I will not try to describe what I felt on reading this simple and straightforward narrative; or with what bitter remorse and helpless wonder I looked back upon the evil my obstinacy had wrought. But for me, and my insatiate thirst for wealth, these men would now have been living and happy. I felt as if I had been their murderer, and raved and wept miserably as I dug a third trench, and laid in it the remains of my brave and honest mate.

Besides all this, there was a heavy mystery hanging upon me, which I tried to fathom, and could not comprehend. Taylor's narrative was dated just eight months after I left the ship, and to me it seemed that scarcely three had gone by. Nor was that all. His body had had time to decay to a mere skeleton — the ship had had time to become a mere wreck — my own head had had time to grow grey! What had happened to me? I asked myself that

weary question again, and again, and again, till my head and my heart ached, and I could only kneel down and pray to God that my wits were not taken from me.

I found the watch with difficulty, and, taking it and the paper with me, went back, sadly and wearily, to my cavern by the sea. I had now no hope or object left but to escape from the island if I could, and this thought haunted me all the way home, and possessed me day and night. For more than a week I deliberated as to what means were best for my purpose, and hesitated whether to build me a raft of the ship's timbers, or try to fit the long-boat for sea. I decided at last upon the latter. I spent many weeks in piecing, caulking and trimming her to the best of my ability, and thought myself quite a skilful ship's carpenter when I had fitted her with a mast, and a sail, and a new rudder, and got her ready for the voyage. This done, I hauled her down, with infinite labour and difficulty, as far as the tide mark on the beach; ballasted her with provisions and fresh water, shoved her off at high tide, and put to sea. So eager was I to escape, that I had all but forgotten my bundle of jewels, and had to run for them at the last moment, at the risk of seeing my boat floated off before I could get back. As to venturing once again to the city of treasures, it had never crossed my mind for an instant since the morning when I came down through the palm-forests and found the *Mary-Jane* a ruin on the beach. Nothing would now have induced me to return there. I believed the place to be accursed, and could not

think of it without a shudder. As for the captain of the *Adventure*, I believed him to be the Evil One in person, and his store of gold an infernal bait to lure men to destruction! I believed it then, and I believe it now, solemnly.

The rest of my story may be told very briefly. After running before the wind for eleven days and nights, in a northeasterly direction, I was picked up by a Plymouth merchantman, about forty-five miles west of Marignana. The captain and crew treated me with kindness, but evidently looked upon me as a harmless madman. No one believed my story. When I described the islands, they laughed; when I opened my store of jewels, they shook their heads, and gravely assured me that they were only lumps of spar and sandstone; when I described the condition of my ship, and related the misfortunes of my crew, they told me the schooner *Mary-Jane* had been lost at sea twenty years ago, with every hand on board. Unfortunately, I found that I had left my mate's narrative behind me in the cavern, or perhaps my story would have found more credit. When I swore that to me it seemed less than six months since I had put off in the small boat with Joshua Dunn, and was capsized among the breakers, they brought the ship's log to prove that instead of its being the 25th of December A. D. 1760, when I came back to the beach, and saw the *Mary-Jane* lying high and dry between the rocks, it must have been nearer the 25th of December, 1780, the twentieth Christmas, namely, of the glorious and happy reign of

our most gracious sovereign, King George the Third.

Was this true? I know not. Everyone says so but I cannot bring myself to believe that twenty years could have passed over my head like one long summer day. Yet the world is strangely changed, and I with it, and the mystery is still unexplained as ever to my bewildered brain.

I went back to England with the merchantman, and to my native place among the Mendip Hills. My mother had been dead twelve years. Bessie Robinson was married, and the mother of four children. My youngest brother was gone to America; and my old friends had all forgotten me. I came among them like a ghost, and for a long time they could hardly believe that I was indeed the same William Barlow who had sailed away in the *Mary-Jane*, young and full of hope twenty years before.

Since my return home, I have tried to sell my jewels again and again; but in vain. No merchant will buy them. I have sent charts of the Treasure Isles over and over again to the Board of Admiralty, but receive no replies to my letters. My dream of wealth has faded year by year, with my strength and my hopes. I am poor, and I am declining into old age. Everyone is kind to me, but their kindness is mixed with pity; and I feel strange and bewildered at times, not knowing what to think of the past, and seeing nothing to live for in the

ture. Kind people who read this true statement, ay for me.

(Signed) WILLIAM BARLOW,

Discoverer of the Treasure Isles, and formerly Captain of the Schooner *Mary-Jane*.

CHAPTER IV.

MY BROTHER'S GHOST STORY.

THE events which I am about to relate happened to my only brother. I have heard him tell the story many and many a time, never varying in the minutest particular. It happened about thirty years ago, more or less, while he was wandering, sketch-book in hand, among the High Alps, picking up subjects for an illustrated work on Switzerland. Having entered the Oberland by the Brunig Pass, and filled his portfolio with what he used to call "bits" from the neighbourhood of Meyringen, he went over the great Scheideck to Grindelwald, where he arrived one dusky September evening, about three-quarters of an hour after sunset. There had been a fair that day, and the place was crowded. In the best inn there was not an inch of space to spare — there were only two inns at Grindelwald, thirty years ago — so my brother went to the one other, at the end of the covered bridge next the church, and there, with some difficulty, obtained the promise of a pile of rugs and a mattress, in a room which was already occupied by three other travellers.

The "Adler" was a primitive hostelry, half farm, half inn, with great rambling galleries outside, and a

huge general room, like a barn. At the upper end of this room stood long stoves, like metal counters, laden with steaming-pans, and glowing underneath like furnaces. At the lower end, smoking, supping, and chatting, were congregated some thirty or forty guests, chiefly mountaineers, char-drivers, and guides. Among these my brother took his seat; and was served, like the rest, with a bowl of soup, a platter of beef, a flagon of country wine, and a loaf made of Indian corn. Presently, a huge St. Bernard dog came and laid his nose upon my brother's arm. In the meantime he fell into conversation with two Italian youths, bronzed and dark-eyed, near whom he happened to be seated. They were Florentines. Their names, they told him, were Stefano and Battisto. They had been travelling for some months on commission, selling cameos, mosaics, sulphur casts, and the like pretty Italian trifles, and were now on their way to Interlaken and Geneva. Weary of the cold North, they longed, like children, for the moment which should take them back to their own blue hills and grey-green olives; to their workshop on the Ponte Vecchio, and their home down by the Arno.

It was quite a relief to my brother, on going up to bed, to find that these youths were to be two of his fellow-lodgers. The third was already there, and sound asleep, with his face to the wall. They scarcely looked at this third. They were all tired, and all anxious to rise at daybreak, having agreed to walk together over the Wengern Alp as far as Lauterbrunnen. So, my brother and the two youths

exchanged a brief good night, and, before many minutes, were all as far away in the land of dreams as their unknown companion.

My brother slept profoundly — so profoundly that, being roused in the morning by a clamour of merry voices, he sat up dreamily in his rugs, and wondered where he was.

"Good day, signor," cried Battisto. "Here is a fellow-traveller going the same way as ourselves."

"Christien Baumann, native of Kandersteg, musical-box maker by trade, stands five feet eleven in his shoes, and is at monsieur's service to command," said the sleeper of the night before.

He was as fine a young fellow as one would wish to see. Light, and strong, and well proportioned, with curling brown hair, and bright, honest eyes that seemed to dance at every word he uttered.

"Good morning," said my brother. "You were asleep last night when we came up."

"Asleep! I should think so, after being all day in the fair, and walking from Meyringen the evening before. What a capital fair it was!"

"Capital, indeed," said Battisto. "We sold cameos and mosaics yesterday for nearly fifty francs."

"Oh, you sell cameos and mosaics, you two! Show me your cameos, and I will show you my musical-boxes. I have such pretty ones, with coloured views of Geneva and Chillon on the lids, playing two, four, six, and even eight tunes. Bah! I will give you a concert!"

And with this he unstrapped his pack, displayed

his little boxes on the table, and wound them up, one after the other, to the delight of the Italians.

"I helped to make them myself, every one," said he, proudly. "Is it not pretty music? I sometimes set one of them when I go to bed at night, and fall asleep listening to it. I am sure, then, to have pleasant dreams! But let us see your cameos. Perhaps I may buy one for Marie if they are not too dear. Marie is my sweetheart, and we are to be married next week."

"Next week!" exclaimed Stefano. "That is very soon. Battisto has a sweetheart also, up at Impruneta; but they will have to wait a long time before they can buy the ring."

Battisto blushed like a girl.

"Hush, brother!" said he. "Show the cameos to Christien, and give your tongue a holiday."

But Christien was not so to be put off.

"What is her name?" said he. "Tush! Battisto, you must tell me her name! Is she pretty? Is she dark, or fair? Do you often see her when you are at home? Is she very fond of you? Is she as fond of you as Marie is of me?"

"Nay, how should I know that?" asked the soberer Battisto. "She loves me, and I love her — that is all."

"And her name?"

"Margherita."

"A charming name! And she is herself as pretty as her name, I'll engage. Did you say she was fair?"

"I said nothing about it one way or the other,"

exchanged a brief good night, and, before many minutes, were all as far away in the land of dreams as their unknown companion.

My brother slept profoundly — so profoundly that, being roused in the morning by a clamour of merry voices, he sat up dreamily in his rugs, and wondered where he was.

"Good day, signor," cried Battisto. "Here is a fellow-traveller going the same way as ourselves."

"Christien Baumann, native of Kandersteg, musical-box maker by trade, stands five feet eleven in his shoes, and is at monsieur's service to command," said the sleeper of the night before.

He was as fine a young fellow as one would wish to see. Light, and strong, and well proportioned, with curling brown hair, and bright, honest eyes that seemed to dance at every word he uttered.

"Good morning," said my brother. "You were asleep last night when we came up."

"Asleep! I should think so, after being all day in the fair, and walking from Meyringen the evening before. What a capital fair it was!"

"Capital, indeed," said Battisto. "We sold cameos and mosaics yesterday for nearly fifty francs."

"Oh, you sell cameos and mosaics, you two! Show me your cameos, and I will show you my musical-boxes. I have such pretty ones, with coloured views of Geneva and Chillon on the lids, playing two, four, six, and even eight tunes. Bah! I will give you a concert!"

And with this he unstrapped his pack, displayed

his little boxes on the table, and wound them up, one after the other, to the delight of the Italians.

"I helped to make them myself, every one," said he, proudly. "Is it not pretty music? I sometimes set one of them when I go to bed at night, and fall asleep listening to it. I am sure, then, to have pleasant dreams! But let us see your cameos. Perhaps I may buy one for Marie if they are not too dear. Marie is my sweetheart, and we are to be married next week."

"Next week!" exclaimed Stefano. "That is very soon. Battisto has a sweetheart also, up at Impruneta; but they will have to wait a long time before they can buy the ring."

Battisto blushed like a girl.

"Hush, brother!" said he. "Show the cameos to Christien, and give your tongue a holiday."

But Christien was not so to be put off.

"What is her name?" said he. "Tush! Battisto, you must tell me her name! Is she pretty? Is she dark, or fair? Do you often see her when you are at home? Is she very fond of you? Is she as fond of you as Marie is of me?"

"Nay, how should I know that?" asked the soberer Battisto. "She loves me, and I love her — that is all."

"And her name?"

"Margherita."

"A charming name! And she is herself as pretty as her name, I'll engage. Did you say she was fair?"

"I said nothing about it one way or the other,"

said Battisto, unlocking a green box clamped with iron, and taking out tray after tray of his pretty wares. "There! Those pictures all inlaid in little bits are Roman mosaics — these flowers on a black ground are Florentine. The ground is of hard dark stone, and the flowers are made of thin slices of jasper, onyx, cornelian, and so forth. Those forget-me-notes, for instance, are bits of turquoise, and that poppy is cut from a piece of coral."

"I like the Roman ones best," said Christien. "What place is that with all the arches?"

"This is the Coliseum, and the one next to it is St. Peter's. But we Florentines care little for the Roman work. It is not half so fine, or so valuable as ours. The Romans make their mosaics of composition."

"Composition or no, I like the little landscapes best," said Christien. "There is a lovely one, with a pointed building, and a tree, and mountains at the back. How I should like that one for Marie!"

"You may have it for eight francs," replied Battisto; "we sold two of them yesterday for ten each. It represents the tomb of Caius Cestius, near Rome."

"A tomb!" echoed Christien, considerably dismayed. "*Diable!* That would be a dismal present to one's bride."

"She would never guess that it was a tomb, if you did not tell her," suggested Stefano.

Christien shook his head.

"That would be next door to deceiving her," said he.

snow-peaks, better than all the towns in Europe. Marie, too, had been born among the mountains, and it would break her heart if she thought she were to live in Geneva all her life, and never see the Kander Thal again. Chatting thus, the morning wore on to noon, and the party rested awhile in the shade of a clump of gigantic firs festooned with trailing banners of grey-green moss.

Here they ate their luncheon, to the silvery music of one of Christien's little boxes, and by-and-by heard the sullen echo of an avalanche far away on the shoulder of the Jungfrau.

Then they went on again in the burning afternoon, to heights where the Alp-rose fails from the sterile steep, and the brown lichen grows more and more scantily among the stone. Here, only the bleached and barren skeletons of a forest of dead pines varied the desolate monotony; and high on the summit of the pass stood a little solitary inn, between them and the sky.

At this inn they rested again, and drank to the health of Christien and his bride, in a jug of country wine. He was in uncontrollable spirits, and shook hands with all them over and over again.

"By nightfall to-morrow," said he, "I shall hold her once more in my arms! It is now nearly two years since I came home to see her, at the end of my apprenticeship. Now I am foreman, with a salary of thirty francs a week, and well able to marry."

"Thirty francs a week!" echoed Battisto. "*Corpo di Bacco!* that is a little fortune."

said Battisto, unlocking a green box clamped with iron, and taking out tray after tray of his pretty wares. "There! Those pictures all inlaid in little bits are Roman mosaics — these flowers on a black ground are Florentine. The ground is of hard dark stone, and the flowers are made of thin slices of jasper, onyx, cornelian, and so forth. Those forget-me-notes, for instance, are bits of turquoise, and that poppy is cut from a piece of coral."

"I like the Roman ones best," said Christien. "What place is that with all the arches?"

"This is the Coliseum, and the one next to it is St. Peter's. But we Florentines care little for the Roman work. It is not half so fine, or so valuable as ours. The Romans make their mosaics of composition."

"Composition or no, I like the little landscapes best," said Christien. "There is a lovely one, with a pointed building, and a tree, and mountains at the back. How I should like that one for Marie!"

"You may have it for eight francs," replied Battisto; "we sold two of them yesterday for ten each. It represents the tomb of Caius Cestius, near Rome."

"A tomb!" echoed Christien, considerably dismayed. "*Diable!* That would be a dismal present to one's bride."

"She would never guess that it was a tomb, if you did not tell her," suggested Stefano.

Christien shook his head.

"That would be next door to deceiving her," said he.

"Nay," interposed my brother, "the owner of at tomb has been dead these eighteen or nineteen undred years. One almost forgets that he was ever uried in it."

"Eighteen or nineteen hundred years! Then he as a heathen?"

"Undoubtedly, if by that you mean that he lived efore Christ."

Christien's face lighted up immediately.

"Oh! that settles the question," said he, pulling ut his little canvas purse, and paying his money own at once. "A heathen's tomb is as good as no omb at all. I'll have it made into a brooch for her, t Interlaken. Tell me, Battisto, what shall you ake home to Italy for your Margherita?"

Battisto laughed, and chinked his eight francs.

"That depends on trade," said he; "if we make ood profits between this and Christmas, I may take er a Swiss muslin from Berne; but we have already een away seven months, and we have hardly made hundred francs over and above our expenses."

And with this, the talk turned upon general natters, the Florentines locked away their treasures, Christien restrapped his pack, and my brother and ll went down together, and breakfasted in the open ir outside the inn.

It was a magnificent morning, cloudless and unny, with a cool breeze that rustled in the vine pon the porch, and flecked the table with shifting hadows of green leaves. All around and about hem stood the great mountains, with their blue-vhite glaciers bristling down to the verge of the

pastures, and the pine-woods creeping darkly up their sides. To the left, the Wetterhorn; to the right, the Eiger; straight before them, dazzling and imperishable, like peaks of frosted silver, the Viescher-hörner clustered on the verge of an icy precipice. Breakfast over, they bade farewell to their hostess, and, mountain-staff in hand, took the path to the Wengern Alp. Half in light, half in shadow, lay the quiet valley, dotted over with farms, and traversed by a torrent that rushed, milk-white, from its prison in the glacier. The three lads walked briskly in advance, their voices chiming together every now and then in chorus of laughter. Somehow, my brother felt sad. He lingered behind, and, plucking a little red flower from the bank, watched it hurry away with the torrent, like a life on the stream of time. Why was his heart so heavy, and why were their hearts so light?

As the day went on, my brother's melancholy, and the mirth of the young men, seemed to increase. Full of youth and hope, they talked of the joyous future, and built up pleasant castles in the air. Battisto, grown more communicative, admitted that to marry Margherita, and become a master mosaicist, would fulfil the dearest wish of his life. Stefano, not being in love, preferred to travel. Christien, who seemed to be the most prosperous, declared that it was his darling ambition to rent a farm in his native Kander Valley, and lead the patriarchal life of his fathers. As for the musical-box trade, he said, one must live in Geneva to make it answer; but, for his part, he loved the pine-forests and the

snow-peaks, better than all the towns in Europe. Marie, too, had been born among the mountains, and it would break her heart if she thought she were to live in Geneva all her life, and never see the Kander Thal again. Chatting thus, the morning wore on to noon, and the party rested awhile in the shade of a clump of gigantic firs festooned with trailing banners of grey-green moss.

Here they ate their luncheon, to the silvery music of one of Christien's little boxes, and by-and-by heard the sullen echo of an avalanche far away on the shoulder of the Jungfrau.

Then they went on again in the burning afternoon, to heights where the Alp-rose fails from the sterile steep, and the brown lichen grows more and more scantily among the stone. Here, only the bleached and barren skeletons of a forest of dead pines varied the desolate monotony; and high on the summit of the pass stood a little solitary inn, between them and the sky.

At this inn they rested again, and drank to the health of Christien and his bride, in a jug of country wine. He was in uncontrollable spirits, and shook hands with all them over and over again.

"By nightfall to-morrow," said he, "I shall hold her once more in my arms! It is now nearly two years since I came home to see her, at the end of my apprenticeship. Now I am foreman, with a salary of thirty francs a week, and well able to marry."

"Thirty francs a week!" echoed Battisto. "*Corpo di Bacco!* that is a little fortune."

pastures, and the pine-woods creeping darkly up their sides. To the left, the Wetterhorn; to the right, the Eiger; straight before them, dazzling and imperishable, like peaks of frosted silver, the Viescher-hörner clustered on the verge of an icy precipice. Breakfast over, they bade farewell to their hostess, and, mountain-staff in hand, took the path to the Wengern Alp. Half in light, half in shadow, lay the quiet valley, dotted over with farms, and traversed by a torrent that rushed, milk-white, from its prison in the glacier. The three lads walked briskly in advance, their voices chiming together every now and then in chorus of laughter. Somehow, my brother felt sad. He lingered behind, and, plucking a little red flower from the bank, watched it hurry away with the torrent, like a life on the stream of time. Why was his heart so heavy, and why were their hearts so light?

As the day went on, my brother's melancholy, and the mirth of the young men, seemed to increase. Full of youth and hope, they talked of the joyous future, and built up pleasant castles in the air. Battisto, grown more communicative, admitted that to marry Margherita, and become a master mosaicist, would fulfil the dearest wish of his life. Stefano, not being in love, preferred to travel. Christien, who seemed to be the most prosperous, declared that it was his darling ambition to rent a farm in his native Kander Valley, and lead the patriarchal life of his fathers. As for the musical-box trade, he said, one must live in Geneva to make it answer; but, for his part, he loved the pine-forests and the

snow-peaks, better than all the towns in Europe. Marie, too, had been born among the mountains, and it would break her heart if she thought she were to live in Geneva all her life, and never see the Kander Thal again. Chatting thus, the morning wore on to noon, and the party rested awhile in the shade of a clump of gigantic firs festooned with trailing banners of grey-green moss.

Here they ate their luncheon, to the silvery music of one of Christien's little boxes, and by-and-by heard the sullen echo of an avalanche far away on the shoulder of the Jungfrau.

Then they went on again in the burning afternoon, to heights where the Alp-rose fails from the sterile steep, and the brown lichen grows more and more scantily among the stone. Here, only the bleached and barren skeletons of a forest of dead pines varied the desolate monotony; and high on the summit of the pass stood a little solitary inn, between them and the sky.

At this inn they rested again, and drank to the health of Christien and his bride, in a jug of country wine. He was in uncontrollable spirits, and shook hands with all them over and over again.

"By nightfall to-morrow," said he, "I shall hold her once more in my arms! It is now nearly two years since I came home to see her, at the end of my apprenticeship. Now I am foreman, with a salary of thirty francs a week, and well able to marry."

"Thirty francs a week!" echoed Battisto. "*Corpo di Bacco!* that is a little fortune."

Christien's face beamed.

"Yes," said he, "we shall be very happy; and, by-and-by — who knows? — we may end our days in the Kander Thal, and bring up our children to succeed us. Ah! if Marie knew that I should be there to-morrow night, how delighted she would be!"

"How so?" said my brother. "Does she not expect you?"

"Not a bit of it. She has no idea that I can be there till the day after to-morrow — nor could I, if I took the road all round by Unterseen and Frütigen. I mean to sleep to-night at Lauterbrunnen, and to-morrow morning shall strike across the Tschlingel glacier to Kandersteg. If I rise a little before day-break, I shall be at home by sunset."

At this moment the path took a sudden turn, and began to descend in sight of an immense perspective of very distant valleys. Christien flung his cap into the air, and uttered a great shout.

"Look!" said he, stretching out his arms, as if to embrace the dear familiar scene: "Oh, look! There are the hills and woods of Interlaken, and here, below the precipices on which we stand, lies Lauterbrunnen! God be praised, who has made our native land so beautiful!"

The Italians smiled at each other, thinking their own Arno valley far more fair; but my brother's heart warmed to the boy, and echoed his thanks-giving in that spirit which accepts all beauty as a birthright and an inheritance. And now their course lay across an immense plateau, all rich with corn-

fields and meadows, and studded with substantial homesteads built of old brown wood, with huge sheltering eaves, and strings of Indian corn hanging like golden ingots along the carven balconies. Blue whortleberries grew beside the footway, and now and then they came upon a wild gentian, or a star-shaped immortelle. Then the path became a mere zigzag on the face of the precipice, and in less than half an hour, they reached the lowest level of the valley. The glowing afternoon had not yet faded from the uppermost pines, when they were all dining together in the parlour of a little inn looking to the Jungfrau. In the evening my brother wrote letters, while the three lads strolled about the village. At nine o'clock they bade each other good night, and went to their several rooms.

Weary as he was, my brother found it impossible to sleep. The same unaccountable melancholy still possessed him, and when at last he dropped into an uneasy slumber, it was but to start over and over and over again from frightful dreams, faint with a nameless terror. Towards morning he fell into a profound sleep, and never woke until the day was fast advancing towards noon. He then found to his regret, that Christien had long since gone. He had risen before daybreak, breakfasted by candlelight, and started off in the grey dawn — "as merry," said the host, "as a fiddler at a fair."

Stefano and Battisto were still waiting to see my brother; being charged by Christien with a friendly farewell message to him, and an invitation to the wedding. They, too, were asked, and meant

to go; so my brother agreed to meet them at Interlaken on the following Tuesday, whence they might walk to Kandersteg by easy stages, reaching their destination on the Thursday morning, in time to go to church with the bridal party. My brother then bought some of the little Florentine cameos, wished the two boys every good fortune, and watched them down the road till he could see them no longer.

Left now to himself, he wandered out with his sketch-book, and spent the day in the upper valley. At sunset, he dined alone in his chamber, by the light of a single lamp. This meal despatched, he drew nearer to the fire, took out a pocket edition of Goethe's Essays on Art, and promised himself some hours of pleasant reading.

Ah, how well I know that very book, in its faded cover, and how often I have heard him describe that lonely evening!

The night had by this time set in cold and wet. The damp logs spluttered on the hearth, and a wailing wind swept down the valley, bearing the rain in sudden gusts against the panes. My brother soon found that to read was impossible. His attention wandered incessantly. He read the same sentence over and over again, unconscious of its meaning, and fell into long trains of thought leading far into the dim past.

Thus the hours went by, and at eleven o'clock he heard the doors closing below, and the household retiring to rest. He determined to yield no longer to this dreaming apathy. He threw on fresh logs, trimmed the lamp, and took several turns about the

room. Then he opened the casement, and suffered the rain to beat against his face, and the wind to ruffle his hair, as it ruffled the acacia leaves in the garden below. Some minutes passed thus, and when, at length, he closed the window and came back into the room, his face and hair and all the front of his shirt were thoroughly saturated. To unstrap his knapsack and take out a dry shirt was, of course, his first impulse — to drop the garment, listen eagerly, and start to his feet, breathless and bewildered, was the next.

For, borne fitfully upon the outer breeze — now sweeping past the window, now dying in the distance — he heard a well-remembered strain of melody, subtle and silvery as the "sweet airs" of Prospero's isle, and proceeding unmistakeably from the musical-box which had, the day before, accompanied the luncheon under the fir-trees of the Wengern Alp!

Had Christien come back, and was it thus that he announced his return? If so, where was he? Under the window? Outside in the corridor? Sheltering in the porch, and waiting for admittance? My brother threw open the casement again, and called him by his name.

"Christien! Is that you?"

All without was intensely silent. He could hear the last gust of wind and rain moaning farther and farther away upon its wild course down the valley, and the pine trees shivering, like living things.

"Christien!" he said again, and his own voice seemed to echo strangely on his ear. "Speak! Is it you?"

Still no one answered. He leaned out into the dark night; but could see nothing — not even the outline of the porch below. He began to think that his imagination had deceived him, when suddenly the strain burst forth again; — this time, apparently in his own chamber.

As he turned, expecting to find Christien at his elbow, the sounds broke off abruptly, and a sensation of intensest cold seized him in every limb — not the mere chill of nervous terror; not the mere physical result of exposure to wind and rain; but a deadly freezing of every vein, a paralysis of every nerve, an appalling consciousness that in a few moments more the lungs must cease to play, and the heart to beat! Powerless to speak or stir, he closed his eyes, and believed that he was dying.

This strange faintness lasted but a few seconds. Gradually the vital warmth returned, and, with it, strength to close the window, and stagger to a chair. As he did so, he found the breast of his shirt all stiff and frozen, and the rain clinging in solid icicles upon his hair.

He looked at his watch. It had stopped at twenty minutes before twelve. He took his thermometer from the chimney-piece, and found the mercury at seventy. Heavenly powers! How were these things possible in a temperature of seventy degrees, and with a large fire blazing on the hearth?

He poured out half a tumbler of cognac, and drank it at a draught. Going to bed was out of the question. He felt that he dared not sleep — that he scarcely dared to think. All he could do, was to

change his linen, pile on more logs, wrap himself in his blankets, and sit all night in an easy-chair before the fire.

My brother had not long sat thus, however, before the warmth, and probably the nervous reaction, drew him off to sleep. In the morning he found himself lying on the bed, without being able to remember in the least how or when he reached it.

It was again a glorious day. The rain and wind were gone, and the Silberhorn at the end of the valley lifted its head into an unclouded sky. Looking out upon the sunshine, he almost doubted the events of the night, and, but for the evidence of his watch, which still pointed to twenty minutes before twelve, would have been disposed to treat the whole matter as a dream. As it was, he attributed more than half his terrors to the prompting of an over-active and over-wearied brain. For all this, he still felt depressed and uneasy, and so very unwilling to pass another night at Lauterbrunnen that he made up his mind to proceed that morning to Interlaken. While he was yet loitering over his breakfast, and considering whether he should walk the seven miles of road, or hire a vehicle, a char came rapidly to the inn door, and a young man jumped out.

"Why, Battisto!" exclaimed my brother in astonishment, as he came into the room; "what brings *you* here to-day? Where is Stefano?"

"I have left him at Interlaken, signor," replied the Italian.

Something there was in his voice, something in his face, both strange and startling.

"What is the matter?" asked my brother, breathlessly. "He is not ill? No accident has happened?"

Battisto shook his head, glanced furtively up and down the passage, and closed the door.

"Stefano is well, signor; but — but a circumstance has occurred — a circumstance so strange! . . . . Signor, do you believe in spirits?"

"In spirits, Battisto?"

"Ay, signor; for if ever the spirit of any man, dead or living, appealed to human ears, the spirit of Christien came to me last night at twenty minutes before twelve o'clock."

"At twenty minutes before twelve o'clock!" repeated my brother."

"I was in bed, signor, and Stefano was sleeping in the same room. I had gone up quite warm, and had fallen asleep, full of pleasant thoughts. By-and-by, although I had plenty of bed-clothes, and a rug over me as well, I woke, frozen with cold and scarcely able to breathe. I tried to call to Stefano; but I had no power to utter the slightest sound. I thought my last moment was come. All at once, I heard a sound under the window — a sound which I knew to be Christien's musical box; and it played as it played when we lunched under the fir-trees, except that it was more wild, and strange, and melancholy — solemn to hear — awful to hear! Then, signor, it grew fainter and fainter — and then it seemed to float past upon the wind, and die away. When it had ceased, my frozen blood grew warm again, and I cried out to Stefano. When I told him what had happened, he declared I had

been only dreaming. I made him strike a light, that I might look at my watch. It pointed to twenty minutes before twelve, and had stopped there; and, stranger still, Stefano's watch had done the very same. Now tell me, signor, do you believe that there is any meaning in this, or do you think, as Stefano persists in thinking, that it was all a dream?"

"What is your own conclusion, Battisto?"

"My conclusion, signor, is, that some harm has happened to poor Christien on the glacier, and that his spirit came to me last night."

"Battisto, he shall have help if living, or rescue for his poor corpse if dead; for I, too, believe that all is not well."

And with this, my brother told him briefly what had occurred to himself in the night; despatched messengers for the three best guides in Lauterbrunnen; and prepared ropes, ice-hatchets, alpenstocks, and all such matters necessary for a glacier expedition. Hasten as he would, however, it was nearly mid-day before the party started.

Arriving in about half an hour at a place called Stechelberg, they left the char, in which they had travelled so far, at a châlet, and ascended a steep path in full view of the Breithorn glacier, which rose up to the left like a battlemented wall of solid ice. The way now lay for some time among pastures and pineforests. Then they came to a little colony of châlets, called Steinberg, where they filled their water-bottles, got their ropes in readiness, and

prepared for the Tschlingel glacier. A few minutes more, and they were on the ice.

At this point the guides called a halt, and consulted together. One was for striking across the lower glacier towards the left, and reaching the upper glacier by the rocks which bound it on the south. The other two preferred the north, or right side; and this my brother finally took. The sun was now pouring down with almost tropical intensity, and the surface of the ice, which was broken into long treacherous fissures, smooth as glass and blue as the summer sky, was both difficult and dangerous. Silently and cautiously they went, tied together at intervals of about three yards each, with two guides in front, and the third bringing up the rear. Turning presently to the right, they found themselves at the foot of a steep rock, some forty feet in height, up which they must climb to reach the upper glacier. The only way in which Battisto or my brother could hope to do this, was by the help of a rope steadied from below and above. Two of the guides accordingly clambered up the face of the crag by notches in the surface, and one remained below. The rope was then let down, and my brother prepared to go first. As he planted his foot in the first notch, a smothered cry from Battisto arrested him.

"*Santa Maria!* Signor, look yonder!"

My brother looked, and there (he ever afterwards declared), as surely as there is a heaven above us all, he saw Christien Baumann standing in the full sunlight, not a hundred yards distant! Almost in the

snow-peaks, better than all the towns in Europe. Marie, too, had been born among the mountains, and it would break her heart if she thought she were to live in Geneva all her life, and never see the Kander Thal again. Chatting thus, the morning wore on to noon, and the party rested awhile in the shade of a clump of gigantic firs festooned with trailing banners of grey-green moss.

Here they ate their luncheon, to the silvery music of one of Christien's little boxes, and by-and-by heard the sullen echo of an avalanche far away on the shoulder of the Jungfrau.

Then they went on again in the burning afternoon, to heights where the Alp-rose fails from the sterile steep, and the brown lichen grows more and more scantily among the stone. Here, only the bleached and barren skeletons of a forest of dead pines varied the desolate monotony; and high on the summit of the pass stood a little solitary inn, between them and the sky.

At this inn they rested again, and drank to the health of Christien and his bride, in a jug of country wine. He was in uncontrollable spirits, and shook hands with all them over and over again.

"By nightfall to-morrow," said he, "I shall hold her once more in my arms! It is now nearly two years since I came home to see her, at the end of my apprenticeship. Now I am foreman, with a salary of thirty francs a week, and well able to marry."

"Thirty francs a week!" echoed Battisto. "*Corpo di Bacco!* that is a little fortune."

"I see something!" cried he. "Something dark, wedged in the teeth of the crevasse, a great way down!"

They all saw it: — a mere indistinguishable mass, almost closed over by the ice-walls at their feet. My brother offered a hundred francs to the man who would go down and bring it up. They all hesitated.

"We don't know what it is," said one.

"Perhaps it is only a dead chamois," suggested another.

Their apathy enraged him.

"It is no chamois," he said, angrily. "It is the body of Christien Baumann, native of Kandersteg. And, by Heaven, if you are all too cowardly to make the attempt, I will go down myself!"

The youngest guide threw off his hat and coat, tied a rope about his waist, and took a hatchet in his hand.

"I will go, monsieur," said he; and without another word, suffered himself to be lowered in.

My brother turned away. A sickening anxiety came upon him, and presently he heard the dull echo of the hatchet far down in the ice. Then there was a call for another rope, and then — the men all drew aside in silence, and my brother saw the youngest guide standing once more beside the chasm, flushed and trembling, with the body of Christien lying at his feet.

Poor Christien! They made a rough bier with their ropes and Alpenstocks, and carried him, with great difficulty, back to Steinberg. There, they got

additional help as far as Stechelberg, where they laid him in the char, and so brought him on to Lauterbrunnen. The next day, my brother made it his sad business to precede the body to Kandersteg, and prepare his friends for its arrival. To this day, though all these things happened thirty years ago, he cannot bear to recall Marie's despair, or all the mourning that he innocently brought upon that peaceful valley. Poor Marie has been dead this many a year; and when my brother last passed through the Kander Thal on his way to the Gemmi, he saw her grave, beside the grave of Christien Baumann, in the village burial-ground.

This is my brother's Ghost Story.

CHAPTER V.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF PROFESSOR HENNEBERG.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. — *Hamlet.*

"THERE are remembrances for which no philosophy will account — sensations for which experience can discover no parallel. Few persons will hesitate to confess to you that they have beheld scenes and faces which were new and yet familiar; of which they seemed to have dreamed in time gone by; and which, without any apparent cause, produced a painfully intimate impression upon their minds. I myself have dreamed of a place, and again forgotten that dream. Years have passed away, and the dream has returned to me, unaltered in the minutest particular. I have at last come suddenly upon the scene in some wild land which I had never visited before, and have recognised it, tree for tree, field for field, as I had beheld it in my dream. Then the dream and the scene became one in my mind, and by that union I learned to wrest from Nature a portion of one of her obscurest secrets. What are these phenomena? Whence these fragmentary recollections which seem to establish a mysterious link between death and sleep? What it death? What is sleep? It is a law of the philo-

sophy of mind that we can think of nothing which we have not perceived. The induction is, that we have perceived these things; but not, perhaps, in our present state of being."

"You believe, then, in the doctrine of pre-existence!" I exclaimed, pushing back my chair, and looking my guest earnestly in the face.

"I believe in the immortality of the soul," replied the Professor with unmoved solemnity. "I feel that I am, and that I have been. Eternity is a circle — you reduce it to a crescent, if you deny the previous half of its immensity. For the soul there is, properly speaking, neither past nor future. It is *now* and eternal. You profess to believe in the immortality of the soul, and in the same breath advance an opinion which, if submitted to a due investigation, would establish a totally adverse system. If this soul of yours be immortal, it must have existed from all time. If not, what guarantee have you that it will continue to be during all time to come? That which shall have no end can have no beginning. It is a part of God, and partakes of his nature. To be born is the same as to die — both are transitionary; not creative or final. Life is but a vesture of the Soul, and as often as we die, we but change one vesture for another."

"But this is the theory of the metempsychosis!" I said, smiling. "You have studied the philosophy of Oriental literature till you have yourself become a believer in the religion of Bramah!"

"All tradition," said the Professor, "is a type of spiritual truth. The superstitions of the East, and

the mythologies of the North — the beautiful Fables of old Greece, and the bold investigations of modern science — all tend to elucidate the same principles; all take their root in those promptings and questionings which are innate in the brain and heart of man. Plato believed that the soul was immortal, and born frequently; that it knew all things; and that what we call learning is but the effort which it makes to recall the wisdom of the Past. 'For to search and to learn,' said the poet-philosopher, 'is reminiscence all.' At the bottom of every religious theory, however wild and savage, lies a perception, — dim perhaps, and distorted, but still a perception — of God and immortality."

"And you think that we have all lived before, and all shall live again?"

"I know it," replied the professor. "My life has been one long succession of these revelations; and I am persuaded that if we would compel the mind to a severe contemplation of itself — if we would resolutely study the phenomena of psychology as developed within the limits of our own consciousness — we might all arrive at the recognition of this mystery of pre-existence. The 'caverns of the mind' are obscure, but not impenetrable; and all who have courage may follow their labyrinthine windings to the light of truth beyond."

Two days after this conversation I left Leipsig for Frankfort. Just as I was taking my seat in the diligence, a man wearing the livery of a college messenger, made his appearance at the window. He

was breathless with running, and held a small parcel in his hand.

"What is this?" I asked, as he handed it to me.

"From Professor Henneberg," he replied. He was proceeding to say more, but the diligence gave a lurch, and rolled heavily forward; the messenger sprang back; the postillions cracked their whips; and in a moment we were clattering over the rough pavement of the town.

There were but two passengers in the interior, beside myself. One was a priest, who did nothing but sleep and read his breviary, and who was perfumed, moreover, with a strong scent of garlic. The other was a young German student, who sat with his head hanging outside the window, smoking cigars.

As I did not find either of my companions particularly prepossessing, and as I had forgotten to furnish my pockets with any literature more entertaining than "Murray's Handbook of South Germany," I was agreeably surprised, on opening the packet, to discover a considerable number of pages in my learned friend's very peculiar handwriting, neatly tied together at the corners, and accompanied by a note, in which he gave me to understand that the MSS. contained a brief sketch of some passages in his life which he thought might interest me, and which were, moreover, illustrative of that doctrine of pre-existence respecting which we had been conversing a few evenings before.

These papers I have taken the liberty of styling —

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF PROFESSOR HENNEBERG.

My parents resided in Dresden, where I was born on the evening of the fourth of May, 1790.

My mother died before I was many hours in being, and I was sent out to nurse at a farmhouse in the immediate neighbourhood of the city. I cannot say that I have any distinct remembrance of the first few years that ushered in this present life with which I am endued. I was kindly treated. I grew in the fields and the sun, like a young plant. My father came regularly every Sunday and Thursday to see me; and I learned to look upon the Frau Schleits as my mother. When I had reached the age of ten years I was removed to a large public school in Dresden.

Up to this time I had received no education whatever. I was as ignorant as a babe of two years old. I therefore entered the academy at a period when I was just of an age to be painfully conscious of my inferiority to boys considerably my juniors. Undoubtedly my father did me a great injustice by thus delaying to furnish my young mind with that intellectual nutriment which is as essential to our mental being as wine and meat to our physical nature; but he was eccentric, arbitrary, and a visionary. It was one of his favourite theories that early childhood should be sacred from the anxieties of learning, and devoted wholly to the acquisition of bodily health; that youth should be appropriated to study;

that manhood should be passed in action; and that old age should enjoy repose. Into these four epochs he would have had the lives of all mankind divided; forgetting that between stages so opposite there could exist no harmony of disposition or unity of purpose. Had he been an absolute monarch, he would have compelled his subjects to conform to these regulations. As he was only a German merchant, and possessed entire control over but one creature in the world, he practised his system at my expense.

For the first month or two I suffered acutely. I found myself pitied by the masters and despised by the boys. The latter excluded me from their sports and openly derided my ignorance. When I stood up to repeat my task, I stood where, five minutes before, boys younger than myself had been reading aloud from Tacitus and Herodotus. When I strove to acquire the rudiments of arithmetic, it was in a room where the least advanced scholar was already occupied upon the problems of Euclid.

To a proud nature such as mine, this state of degradation was intolerable. Though sometimes almost overborne by shame and anguish, I made superhuman efforts to regain the time which had been lost. I was speedily rewarded for my exertions. My progress was astonishing; and, though still far behind the rest, the rapidity with which I mastered all that was given me to learn, and, indeed, the manner in which I frequently anticipated the instructions of the tutors, became the marvel of the school.

My father was wealthy and supplied me liberally with money. This money I devoted wholly to the

purchase of books. When the other boys were playing in the grounds of the academy, I used to steal away to the deserted bed-chambers, or to my accustomed corner in the empty class-room, and there labour earnestly at the acquisition of some of those branches of learning into which I had been but lately inducted, or at which, in the regular course of study, I had not yet arrived. Thus, too, in the morning, before any of my companions were awake, I would draw a volume from beneath my pillow, or tax my memory to recall all the information which I had gathered during the previous day. By these means I not only continued to add hourly to my store, but I forgot nothing that I had once made my own.

And now let me confess something connected with my progress — something upon which I have often reflected with sensations approaching to terror — something which I have since attempted to analyze, and which has guided me to the interpretation of that mystery in which my subsequent life has been enveloped.

Nothing that I learned was entirely new to me.

Yes, strange and awful as it may appear, I never read a book which did not seem as if it had once been familiar to me. All knowledge vibrated in my soul like the echo of a familiar voice. When my teacher was elucidating a problem, or explaining some of the phenomena of science, I invariably outstripped the sense of his argument, and, taking the words from his mouth, would sometimes leap at the conclusion before he had well begun. Many times he has started, questioned me, accused me of

previously studying the book; and always I have proved to him that it had never been for an instant in my possession.

I thus obtained a character for natural powers of reasoning which I could not refute, and yet which I felt were undeserved. It was by no internal ratiocination that I arrived at the knowledge which so surprised, not only my instructors, but myself. The faculty was spontaneous. I had no control over it. It came with all the sudden clearness of conviction, and illumined the subject at once, like a gleam of lightning. I was bewildered sometimes to find how intimately the workings of this comprehension resembled the unsought promptings of memory.

However, I was at this time too young to enter minutely upon so difficult an investigation as that of the operations of the mind, and my thoughts were already charged with undertakings almost beyond their powers. I was therefore content to accept my good fortune without questioning its sources too curiously.

Five years elapsed. During that time I had passed from the lowest bench to the rank of senior scholar at the academy; I had mastered two of the living languages (English and French) besides my own; I was tolerably well-read in the classics; I had gone through the entire routine of school mathematics; and I was the author of an anonymous volume on Social Philosophy.

At this point of my education, my father, in compliance with my earnest solicitations, transferred me to the University of Leipzig, where I had scarcely

entered my name when I received intelligence of his sudden death. My grief was deep and sincere, and the only result of wealth was to augment my love of knowledge, and to increase the severity of my studies.

I now directed my attention principally towards Oriental languages and Oriental literature. I lived the life of a hermit. I existed only in the past. I avoided the abstractions of the outer world; and devoted myself entirely to the acquisition of Hebrew, Persian, Hindoo, and Indian learning.

In college, as at school, my efforts were followed by the same rapid and unvarying success. I bore away the prize at every public examination, and finally received the highest university honours. Still I had no inclination to leave Leipzig. I continued to occupy my old apartments, to prosecute my old studies, and to lead precisely the same life as heretofore. Thus six years more were added to my term of existence; and at twenty-one years of age, on the death of one of my own instructors, I was by unanimous election inducted into the vacant professorship of Oriental literature.

This unparelleled progress surprised no one so much as myself, for I alone knew the extraordinary manner in which it was accomplished. Knowledge came to me more as a revelation than a study — yet the word revelation is inadequate to express my meaning. *Memory*, I repeat — *memory* is the only mental process resembling that to which I owed my success.

I had one friend, by name Frank Ormesby. He

was an Englishman, and had entered the university about a year later than myself. Young, brilliantly gifted, and saturated with the spirit of German literature, he had chosen to finish his education at Leipzig. But for this friendship I should scarcely have had a tie of human affection in common with the world around me.

Frank Ormesby was the last male descendant of an old aristocratic family in the West of England. His ancestors had suffered extensive losses during the period of the Commonwealth, and had regained but a small portion of their property at the hands of the graceless and profligate Charles. Two or three farms, with the old manor-house and park, alone remained to that family whose loyal cavaliers had not hesitated to arm their tenantry and melt their hereditary plate in the service of the Stuarts. Small as it was, the estate was rendered still less valuable through the extravagance of some later Ormesbys; and, when Frank succeeded to it, was so encumbered as scarcely to yield him the few annual hundreds which were necessary to supply the expenses of a gentleman.

In this remote and melancholy manor, shut in by dark old trees, and attended only by a governess and one or two old servants, my friend's young sister lived, in deep seclusion. The pair were orphans; and they were all in all to each other. Frank had not a thought in which the happiness of Grace was not considered; Grace looked up to Frank as to a paragon of truth and talent.

During the long walks which we used sometimes

to take beyond the confines of the city, Frank delighted to talk to me of his sister's gentleness and beauty; and I delighted to listen to him. It was a topic of which we were never weary, and which no discussion could exhaust.

Secluded as I was. from the gentle influences of female society, these conversations produced a profound impression upon my heart. I learned to love without having beheld her. I suffered myself to dream golden dreams. I hung upon his words with the enraptured faith of a devotee before the shrine of a veiled divinity; and yielded up my whole soul to the dangerous fascination.

At length the time came when Frank must return to England. When I must be once more alone — more alone than if I had never possessed his friendship!

One evening we were loitering through the garden of the university, arm-in-arm, silent and melancholy. Each knew the other's thoughts, and neither spoke of parting. Suddenly Frank turned, and said: —

"Why don't you come with me, Henneberg? The trip to England would do you good."

I smiled, and shook my head.

"Ah! no," I said, "I am a snail, and the college is my shell."

"Nonsense!" he replied. "You must come. I will have it so. Who knows? Perhaps you and Grace may fall in love with each other!"

The hot blood rushed up to my face; but I

made no answer. Frank stopped short, and looking earnestly into my eyes —

"Heinrich," he said, "I seem to have spoken lightly, but I have thought deeply. Could this union be, it would fulfil the wish that lies nearest to my heart."

My pulse throbbed — my eyes became suffused with tears. Still I remained silent.

"Will you come?" he asked.

I said, "Yes."

Never before had I travelled beyond the limits of my native Saxony, and so far from feeling any of the anticipative delight of youth, I shrank from the journey with the nervous timidity of a recluse. Frank rallied me upon my apprehensions.

"My good fellow," he exclaimed, "you have shut yourself up in this old German college till you are little better than a dusty moth-eaten folio yourself! You are but twenty-one years of age, and you are pale and wise as a philosopher of eighty. Your clothes hang about you like an old-fashioned binding; your face is as yellow as parchment; you bow as if you were making an Eastern salaam; and the very character of your hand-writing is distorted into a resemblance of Oriental characters. This will never do! You must become rejuvenescent, and make up your mind to descend for once to the level of other people. Be a martyr, Heinrich, and write to your tailor for a dress-suit!"

Having resolved to travel round by the Rhine, we proceeded first of all to Mayence.

On the morning of the third day, an incident

occurred which, to my mind, was deeply significant. It wanted more than two hours of noon. The carriage was ascending a precipitous hill, and we were walking some fifty yards in advance. The air was deliciously cool and fragrant, and we paused every now and then to look upon the fair level prospect of wood and vineyard which we were leaving behind. The birds were singing in the green shade of the lindens beside the road. An old man and a young girl passed us with pleasant words of greeting, and we heard the voices of the vintagers down in the valley. Frank was in high spirits, and sprang forward as if he dared the toilsome hill to weary him.

"See!" he cried, "we shall soon reach the summit, and then I predict that we shall be rewarded by the sight of a divine landscape! Mayence must be close at hand, and we shall see the broad, bright rushing Rhine below."

And he began singing in a loud, clear voice, that song beloved of German students, "To the Rhine — to the Rhine!" I smiled at his fresh-hearted enthusiasm, and followed him somewhat more slowly. It was, indeed, as he had said; and on a sudden we beheld close under our feet, the streets — the cathedral of Mayence — the wide rapid river — the long boat-bridge — the lordly façade of the Palace of Biberich — the banks clothed with plants and autumn flowers — the hurrying steamers with their canvas awnings and their clouds of fleecy smoke — and then, far away, the shadowy hills, the vineyards, the river-side villages, and the winding Rhine flashing along for miles and miles through

all the scene. It was a glorious prospect, and my friend was breathless with delight. But the effect which it produced upon myself was fearful and unexpected. I stood quite still and pale; then, uttering a wild cry, I clasped my hands over my eyes and cast myself upon the ground. I distinctly remembered to have seen that very prospect — those spires and towers — that bridge — that red-hued palace — that far landscape in some past stage of being, vague, dark, forgotten as a dream! When they came to lift me from the spot where I had fallen, they found me in a state of insensibility; and when I recovered my consciousness, it was in a bedchamber of the Königlicher Hof, a little roadside tavern just outside the city. I did not tell Frank the real cause of my illness. I alleged a sudden giddiness as the reason of my cry when falling. He fancied that it might have been a slight sun-stroke, and I allowed him to think so. The next morning I had sufficiently recovered to resume the journey. We now proposed to take a Rhine steamer to Cologne; but as the boat would not start before the afternoon, I yielded to my friend's persuasions, and went with him to visit the Cathedral of Mayence.

All here was so cool and still, that I felt my troubled heart grow calmer. The sunlight coming in through the stained windows flickered in patches of gold and purple on the marble pavement, and cast long lines of light through the dim ruined cloisters beyond. The sacristan was putting fresh flowers on the altar; the great organ, with its front of shining pipes, was quite dumb and breathless,

like a dead giant. Some little flaring tapers were burning on a votive stand beside the door; and an old beggar-woman, with her crutches lying beside her on the ground, was devoutly kneeling before the altar. Leaving these, we hurried through the dirty narrow streets of the town, and sat under the shadow of some leafy walnuts on one of the hills looking over the Rhine. Here we watched the women spinning at their doors, and my friend recited Schiller's wondrous ballad, "The Cranes of Ibycus."

Thus the morning passed away, and in a few hours more we were gliding along the broad current, between vineyards and rocks, and ruined blank-eyed towers; islands with trees dipping down to the water; quaint old towns, with gothic spires and sloping forests of the oak and pine. But there is no need that I should describe the Rhine to you, O my friend, for whom I write these brief pages of troubled memories! Since those days of my youth, you, too, have traversed the scenes of which I speak — you, too, have felt the influence of their beauty sink like dew upon the arid sands of your thirsty heart. If I say that we went on and on, past Coblentz and Andernach, and Bonn — that we stayed for a day at Cologne; that we there hired a vehicle to transport us to Clêves; and that from thence we proceeded along the smooth roads of Holland, you will recall sufficient of your own experience to follow in our track, and to imagine the feelings with which I, a hermit-student, must have contemplated such varied and remarkable scenery.

From Rotterdam we took the steamer for Eng-

land, and in rather more than a fortnight from the date of our departure, arrived one sultry evening in London.

"Shall we stay here for a few days, that I may show you some of the wonders of our great city?" asked Frank, as we sat at supper in a dismal sitting-room at the back of a great gloomy inn in the neighbourhood of St. Paul's Cathedral.

But I felt stunned by the roar and hurry of the streets through which we had just passed.

"Ah, no!" I said; "I am not fit for this place. So much life oppresses me. Let us go quickly to your old quiet home. I shall be better when loitering amid the dim alleys of your park, or dreaming over the books in your library. I need peace — peace and rest!"

* * * * * * * * *

It was already evening when we reached the gates of Ormesby Park. They were very rusty old gates, and creaked mournfully upon their hinges as we rolled through them. A white-headed man crept out of the dilapitated lodge to admit us, and stood looking after the chaise in feeble wonder, as it proceeded up the avenue.

"Poor old Williams!" said Frank, leaning back with a sigh. "He has quite forgotten me!"

"What superb trees!" I exclaimed, looking up at the gigantic branches overhead.

"They *are* beautiful!" replied my friend, more cheerfully. "I have often been tempted, I confess, to cut down the old timber; but now I vow it shall

never be desecrated by the axe. See, there you catch a glimpse of the house."

I leaned forward, and just saw it for a moment through a passing gap. It was an antique Elizabethan building, with gable-ends and large bay windows, and a terraced garden in front.

"I think I know at which window Grace is standing!" said Ormesby. "I wonder how she looks! To think of its being five years since we parted!"

I began to get nervous.

"Does she know that I am coming?" I asked hurriedly.

Frank burst into a hearty laugh.

"Know that you are coming! to be sure she does; and she will be surprised enough when she sees you. Why, man, I told her that I was going to bring the Professor of Oriental Literature with me — a grave old gentleman of eccentric habits, but profound learning, whom I hoped she would try to like for my sake!"

"My dear Frank," I said hastily, "it was unnecessary, I think, to place your friend in so ridiculous a position at his first interview . . ."

"Hush!" said he, grasping me affectionately by the hand; "do not say that. She has long known how I love and value Heinrich Henneberg. And now jump out, for here we are at last!"

We had driven round to the back of the house, where two or three old servants were gathered to receive us. Frank ran past them, and taking a lady

in his arms, who was standing near the door, covered her cheeks and brow with kisses.

"Grace, my darling Grace!" he said, bending his proud head fondly down towards her.

"My dear brother!" replied the lady, hiding her face upon his shoulder, and sobbing aloud.

I turned away; for I had no place there, and my own eyes filled with tears.

"So tall too!" I heard him say; "so tall and so beautiful! So changed; and yet the same dear Grace I left five years ago!"

"Five years ago!" echoed the lady in a low voice.

"But here is Professor Henneberg, waiting to be introduced to you," said Frank, drawing her arm through his. "Heinrich, this is my dear and only sister: Grace, welcome this gentleman — he is my friend."

It was not because I had heard and thought so much of her already; it was not even for her beauty, rare and winning though it was — No, it was for none of these, but for the earnest soul looking out from her dark eyes, that I succumbed in one moment to that deep and passionate tide of love which has never ceased since then to overflow my heart. Confused and silent, I could only bow to her; and when she extended her hand — that small white hand — what could I do but hold it, tremblingly and irresolutely in mine, and then stoop down and kiss it?

"My friend has saluted you after our German fashion, Grace," said Frank smiling, as he saw her

embarrassment and mine. "Abroad we kiss the hand of a lady, and we only shake that of a gentleman. If he be a heart-friend, or a brother, we rub our rough beards together in a fraternal embrace."

A little while afterwards, when we were sitting together in a window overlooking the old park, the lady, after glancing doubtfully towards me twice or thrice, laid her hand gently on her brother's arm, and said —

"But where, my dear Frank, is the other gentleman — the Oriental scholar — whom you prepared me to receive?"

A malicious smile hovered over his lips, and danced in his dark eyes.

"This is the learned Professor in person," he replied, laughingly. "Speak for yourself, friend; and if Grace still continues to doubt your identity, reply with a spirited harangue in Syriac or Sanskrit! By the way, sister mine, can you discover who it is that Henneberg resembles? From the moment I first saw him, I knew that I had been used to a face strangely like his, 'e'en from my boyish days;' yet for my life I cannot tell whose that face may be."

"Nor I," replied Grace Ormesby. "But Professor Henneberg's face seems not unknown to me."

"How beautiful this is!" I exclaimed, stepping out upon the balcony, and looking over the wide, wooded country, the distant hills, the park, and the quaint, formal garden. The moon was just rising

on one side, and the red sun sinking slowly on the other.

"It is a truly English scene," replied the lady; "but I suppose it will not bear comparison with your German forests and vineyards. We have, however, many charming drives around, and some points of view that might delight even a poet."

"*Even* a poet!" repeated Frank, smiling. "Why, I think poets are more easily delighted than other people. There is no scene so dull, and no subject so dry, but they will contrive to throw a grace and glory upon it. We must take you round to-morrow, Henneberg, to the grotto which we, when children, used to call our Hermitage. And there is the old chapel for you to see; it lies down there in that hollow, within the park boundaries. It is a picturesque old place enough. The tombs of our predecessors are ranged all down the side-aisles, and their rusty armour hangs above them —

'The knights' bones are dust,
And their good swords rust;
Their souls are with the saints I trust!'"

"Then your library of old folios!" I exclaimed; "I must see that before anything. How delightful to stroll out with some quaint black-letter pamphlet redolent of the dust of centuries, and lie reading in the shade of yonder trees!"

The lady smiled, and added: —

"Where you will moralize, like 'the melancholy Jaques' —

'Under an oak, whose antique roots peep out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood.'

But I ask your pardon; I should not quote Shakespeare to a foreigner."

"Miss Ormesby is mistaken, if she supposes that we Germans are ignorant of the works of her great poet!" I said, earnestly. "Shakespeare — to use the words of a great German critic — was naturalised in Germany the moment that he was known. The same critic — Augustus Wilhelm von Schlegel — enjoys the distinction of having first directed the attention of Europe to the philosophical significance of his dramas. Before Schlegel, Lessing wrote upon Shakespeare; Herder has studied him; Tieck began a series of letters upon his plays; and Göthe, in his 'Wilhelm Meister,' has spoken of him with reverence and enthusiasm."

"This is indeed a pleasant tale for English ears!" exclaimed the lady, with a flush upon her pale cheek; "and we should be proud to hear it. I wish I spoke your language as well as you speak ours."

And so the conversation changed again, and flowed on into other channels, like a mountain-stream, now winding past a little quiet isle, now dashing over the steep rocks, now murmuring softly through the rushes near a cottage-door, and anon wandering out and losing itself in the deep sea. Thus the hours glided away unnoticed, and it was nearly midnight when I withdrew.

Mine was a large dark room, with an enormous bed, like a hearse, in the centre of the floor. Two ebony cabinets, richly inlaid, stood on either side of the fireplace. An antique Venetian mirror was

suspended above the toilette-table, and some high-backed chairs and *moyen age* fauteuils were scattered about in various directions.

Glancing round at these details, I walked over to one of the casements, threw it open, and, leaning forward into the moonlight, thought of the lady whom I already dared to love. It was long past midnight when I returned into the chamber, and dropped upon a chair:

> "Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e'l mese, e l'anno,
> E la stagione, e'l tempo, e l'ora, e 'l punto,
> E'l bel paese, e'l loco, ov' io fui giunto
> Da due begli occhi che legato m'hanno!" *

I exclaimed, in the impassioned words of Petrarch, as I bent my head down upon my hands, and whispered one name softly to myself. After a time I looked up again; my eyes wandered listlessly round the room, and encountered a picture which I had not before observed. I rose; I advanced towards it; I raised the candle ... a freezing sensation came upon me; my eyes grew dim; my heart stood still. In that portrait I recognized — *myself!*

Suddenly I turned and rushed to the door; but, as my fingers closed upon the handle, I paused.

"What folly!" I said. "It can only be a mirror!"

So I nerved myself to return.

Once more I stood before it, and surveyed it steadily. It was no mirror, but a picture — an old

* "Blessed be the day, the month, the year, the season, the weather, the hour, and point of time, and the beautiful country, and the place where I was taken captive by those two beautiful eyes which have enchanted me!"

oil-painting, cracked in many places, and mellow with the deepened tones of age. The portrait represented a young man in the costume of the reign of James the first, with ruff and doublet. But the face — the face! I sickened as I gazed upon it; for every feature was mine! The long light air, descending almost to the shoulders; the pallid hue and anxious brow, the compressed lips and fair moustache, the very meaning and expression of the eye — all, all my own, as though reflected from the surface of a mirror!

I stood fascinated, spellbound: my eyes were riveted upon the picture, and its eyes, glance for glance, on mine. At length the tide of horror seemed to burst its bounds; a groan broke from my lips, and dashing my lamp upon the ground that I might behold the face no more, I flew to the window, and leaped out into the garden.

All that night, hour after hour, I wandered through the avenues and glades of the park, startling the red-deer in their midnight covers, and scattering the dew-drops from the ferns as I passed by.

The morning dawned ere long; the sun shone, the lark rose singing, and the day-flowers opened in the grass. At seven o'clock I bent my steps towards the house, weary, haggard, and depressed. Frank met me in the garden.

"You are early this morning, Heinrich," he said, gaily. Then, observing the expression of my countenance, "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"I have not slept at all," I replied, in a hollow

tone; "and I have suffered the torture of a hundred sleepless nights in one. Come with me to my bed-chamber, and I will tell you."

We went, and I told him. He heard me out in silence, and looked frequently from the portrait to my face. When I had done, he laughed aloud and shook his head.

"I acknowledge," he said, "that the resemblance is striking; and not only the resemblance, but the coincidence; for, to tell you the truth, this is actually the portrait of one of your countrymen — a Baron von Ravensberg, of Suabia, who married a daughter of our house in the year 1614. At the same time, my dear Heinrich, I cannot hear of anything supernatural in the matter. It is one of those fortuitous circumstances which are of daily occurrence; and, after all, the likeness may be, in a great measure, simply national. We know how strongly the peasantry of Scotland and of Ireland are impressed with one physiognomical stamp; and (not to cite the tribes of coloured men, or even the Chinese and Tatars) how remarkably are these facial characteristics imprinted upon the natives of America! The last instance is, indeed, one which admits of wide physiological inquiry. The Americans, gathered together as they are from all the shores of the old world, have, as it were, received a stamp of individuality from the very climate in which they live."

I heard, but scarcely heeded his words. When he had ceased speaking, I looked up as if from a dream.

"It may be all very true, Ormesby," I replied; "but I cannot occupy this room another night."

"Nor is there any occasion that you should," said he, cheerily. "Come down to the breakfast-parlour, and I will order the green bed-room to be prepared for you!"

I felt now as if some destiny were upon me; and many days elapsed before I regained my cheerfulness. By degrees, however, the impression wore away, and as I no longer saw, I ceased to think of the picture.

* * * * * *
* * * * * *
* * * * * *

Oh, thou solitary dream of my life! come back once more, and let me for a brief moment forget the years that have risen up between my soul and thee!

I loved her — shall I say *loved?* Ah, no! I love her still. I shall love her till I die! Let me tell how deep and passionate that love was; how I lived day after day in the sweet air she breathed; how I sat and watched the inner-light of her dark, earnest eyes; how my heart failed within me, listening to her voice!

Her voice! Ah, that sweet low voice! It vibrates even now upon my ear, and brings the stranger tears back to my eyes! How can I paint the long golden days of that dreamy autumn season, when I went forth by her side through the yellow corn fields, and the pleasant lanes? Sometimes we sat beneath the spreading boughs, while I read aloud to

her from Shakespeare, or translated a few pages of Schiller. How my voice rose and trembled as the words translated the language of my heart!

Then there were the happy evenings when we sat by the open windows of the old drawing-room, looking out upon the dusky park and the starry sky; when the harvest-moon shone down upon the stirless trees; when the nightingale shook her wild song from her little throat hard by; and the drowsy air hung enchanted over all!

At such times Grace would touch the keys of the piano, and sing the ballads of my native land.

Why do I linger thus? It was but a dream — let me tell of my awakening.

At the extremity of my friend's garden there stood an old-fashioned summer-house, shaped like a pagoda, with a gilt ball upon the summit. This point commanded an extensive and beautiful prospect. In front stood the old house, with its carven gable ends and burnished weather-cocks; the garden, curiously planted in formal beds, and interspersed with trees of quaintly-cut pyramidal form; the terraced walks; the spreading park; and, beyond the park, the summits of the blue hills far away. In the summer-house stood a table and two rustic chairs; and just before the entrance a simple pedestal was erected, whereon a dial, worn and rusted by the storms of many years, told the silent hours by the sun.

Here it was that I sat one sunny morning, face to face with her. An open volume lay beside me on the table. I had been reading to her, and she

was busy with some dainty needlework. I could not see her eyes for the dark curls that fell adown her cheeks.

The book was Chaucer — I remember it well. I had been reading the Knight's Tale, and we had broken off at the death of Arcite. After a few words of admiration, there came a pause; and as I turned to resume the poem, my eyes rested upon her, and I could not remove them. Very silently I sat there looking at her, watching the flitting of her fingers, and the coming and going of her breath; and I asked myself — "Can this be life, or is it nothing but a dream?"

Suddenly, I felt the deep love welling upwards from my heart to my lips; and then — then I found myself at her feet, clasping her hands in mine, and saying over and over again, in a quick broken voice, between tears and trembling: —

"Grace! dear, dearest Grace, I love you!"

But she made no answer, and only sat quite pale and still, and downward-looking, like a marble saint.

"Not one word, Grace — not one?"

Her lips quivered. Slowly she lifted up her face, and fixed her eyes on mine. Oh! how deep they were — how dark — how earnest!

"Heinrich," she said, in a low clear voice, "Heinrich, I loved you long ago — I loved you in imagination, for years before we met."

Surely there was nothing in these words that should not have filled me with delight, and yet they

smote upon me with a sensation of indescribable horror.

I had heard them before — ay, and in that very spot!

With the swiftness of lightning it rushed upon me; and in one passing second, as a landscape flits before us in the flashes of a storm, I recollected, oh! heavens, not only the place, the hour, the summer-house, the garden; but herself — her words — her eyes! all, all as familiar as they were a portion of my own being!

"Grace! Grace!" I shrieked, springing to my feet, and clasping my hands wildly above my head, "do you not remember? — once before — here, here — centuries ago! — do you not remember? — do you not — do you not remem . . ."

A choking, dreadful feeling arrested my breath; the ground rocked beneath my feet; a red mist swam before my eyes — I staggered — I fell!

I remember nothing of what followed.

* * * * * *

Even now it seems to me as if years passed away between that moment and the period when my consciousness returned. Long passionless years — without a thought, without a hope, without a fear; dark as night, and blank as dreamless sleep!

But it was not so. Scarcely three weeks had elapsed since I was seized with the fever; and so far from having lain there in a passive trance, I had all the time been racked by the burning visions of delirium.

Brought to the very confines of the grave, weak,

emaciated, and careless of all around me, I permitted two or three days to pass away in this state of listless debility, without asking even a question about the past, or daring to dwell for an instant upon the future. I had no power to think.

Those first days of sanity glided by like waking dreams, and I passed insensibly from drowsy perception to long and frequent slumbers. While awake, I listened idly to the ticking of the clock, and to the passing footsteps on the stairs; watched the sunlight creeping slowly round the walls with the advancing day; followed, like a child, the quiet movements of my nurse: and accepted, without question, the medicines and aliments which she brought me. I was feebly conscious, too, of the frequent visits of the doctor; and when he felt my pulse, and enjoined me not to speak, I was too weak and weary even to reply.

On the morning of the third (or it might have been the fourth) day, I woke from a long sleep which seemed to have lasted all the night, and I felt the springs of life and thought renewed within me. I looked round the room, and, for the first time, wondered where I was.

The nurse was soundly sleeping in an armchair at my bedside. The room was large and airy. The window was shadowed by a tree, the leaves of which rustled with the wind. Some bookshelves, laden with bright new volumes, were suspended against the wall; and a small table, covered with phials and wine-glasses, was placed at the foot of the bed.

I asked myself where I had been before this illness, and in one moment I remembered all, even to the last broken words!

I must have given utterance to some exclamation, for my attendant woke, and turned a startled face upon me.

"Nurse," I said eagerly, "where am I? — whose house is this?"

"Hush, sir! this is Dr. Howard's; but you are to keep quiet. Here is the doctor himself!"

The door opened, and a gentlemanly-looking man entered. Seeing me awake, he smiled pleasantly, and took a seat beside my bed.

"I see by your face, my young friend, that you are better," he said. "Did I hear you asking where you are? You are my guest and patient."

"How came I here?"

"You have had a brain fever, and were removed to my dwelling at my request. By that arrangement I have been enabled to give your case more attention. I live in the village of Torringhurst, two miles from Ormesby Park."

"And Frank, and — and Miss Ormesby?" I began hesitatingly.

"Your friends have been very anxious for you," he said, with some irresolution, as if scarce knowing how to reply. "Mr. Ormesby watched many nights at your bedside. They — they waited till they knew you to be out of danger."

"And then?" I cried eagerly.

"And then they left Ormesby Park for the Continent."

"For the Continent!" I repeated. "Then I must follow them!"

The doctor laid his hand gently on my shoulder. I sank back upon the pillows, utterly powerless; and he resumed: —

"I have promised not to say where they are gone; and — and they do not wish that you should follow."

"But I *will* go! Why should I not? What have I done that I should be treated thus? Oh! cruel, cruel!"

I was so weak and wretched that I burst into tears, and sobbed like a child.

He looked at me gravely and compassionately.

"Herr Professor," he said, taking my hand in his, and looking into my eyes, "you are a man of education and intellect. I well know that to leave you in doubt would be not only the unkindest, but the unwisest thing that I could do. Now listen to me, and prepare yourself for a great disappointment. Shortly before your seizure, you made some observations (owing probably to the approach of fever) which much shocked and alarmed your friend's sister. It appears, likewise, that a few weeks before, you expressed yourself very strangely with respect to a picture. These two circumstances, I regret to say, have impressed your friends with the idea that you are the victim, I will not say of unsound mind, but of a delusive theory, highly injurious to your own mental and physical well-being, as well as to the happiness of those connected with you. Such being the case, Mr. Ormesby is of opinion

your intimacy with his sister must unavoidably
e; and the better to effect this, he has taken her
ad for a time. Mr. Ormesby entrusted me with
letter for you."

Here is a transcript of the letter: —

"Deeply painful as it is to me thus to address
after so severe an illness, my dear Heinrich, I
t write a few lines, entreating your forgiveness
the apparent unkindness of which I am guilty in
quitting England before you are sufficiently
vered to wish me farewell. I will leave to my
l friend Dr. Howard the ungrateful task of ex-
ning my motives for this departure; but I can
t only my own pen to describe to you the deep
f which that determination has cost me. Nothing
the sense of a duty still more imperative than
of friendship could have forced me to inflict
ı you a disappointment in which I entreat you
elieve I have an equal share. My dear old col-
friend, forgive and still love me, for my attach-
t to you must and will ever be the same. Per-
ı in time to come, when all that has lately
ed shall be, if not forgotten, at least unregretted,
will suffer me to resume my old place in your
idence, and will welcome to your hearth and
t

"Your friend,
"FRANK ORMESBY."

* * * * * *

There are times when this beautiful world seems
ut on a mourning garb, as if in sympathy with

the grief that consumes us; when the trees shake their arms in mute sorrow, and scatter their withered leaves like ashes on our heads; when the slow rains weep down around us, and the very clouds look old above. Then, like Hamlet the Dane, "This goodly frame, the earth, seems to us a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire, appears no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours."

And so it was with me, walking solitary and sad beneath the sighing trees in one of the public gardens of Paris.

The dead leaves rustled as I trod, and the bare branches clashed together in the wind. A little to the right flowed the tide of pleasure-seekers. Overhead the clouds hung low and dark, now and then shedding brief showers.

I was still weak and suffering; but I could not stay in the country she had left. I came hither, seeking change and distraction — perhaps, too, with a vague hope that I might find her. Could I but see her once more; could I but hear the sweet sound of her voice, bidding me (if it must be so) an eternal farewell, I felt I should be more at peace with the world and myself.

But in Paris I had found her not — neither had I found peace, nor hope, nor rest. The clouds had rolled between me and the sun, and every land alike was darkened.

I then felt that I could say with Sir Thomas Brown — "For the world, I count it not an inn, but

hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in."

t I never reproached her with my sorrow! Nay, I ssed her for the love that had once beamed on from her eyes, and for the happy, happy times t must return no more.

Think you, my friend, that I have changed ce then? No, I love her still, with a love and reence inexpressible. She believed me mad. It is ard word — perhaps it was a hard thought — but s it hers?

I cannot tell; yet I think not. At all events, I l the sweet assurance that she once loved, and that always pitied me.

Sometimes I feared it might be as she thought. ght not these flashes of strange memory be the al precursors of insanity? I reasoned. I examined self; but I found no inward corroboration. And this time, even when my heart was breaking, I ed her, and was thankful that I loved. Even n, I would not have changed the memory of that am for the blank that went before.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.

e thee well, sweet Grace Ormesby — fare thee l, dear lady of my love! Go from these pages as n my life, and therein be no more seen. Thy e face and earnest eyes are still present to me ough the mists of many years. Yet doth Time h every season steal somewhat from the distinct- s of the vision; and as mine eyes grow dim, so

doth thine image recede farther and farther into the dusky chambers of the Past. Peace be with thee, lady, wheresoe'er thou art — peace be with thee!

The life of a great city accords ill with a great grief; and yet we do well to mingle with our fellow-creatures, though it be only in the streets of a city where we have no friends. Not the most misanthropic can thread that varying tide without feeling that he is a portion of the many, and that it is his duty to be a worker among men. He has a part to play, and he there knows that he is called upon to play it.

Walking in that deserted alley of the Luxembourg Gardens, within hearing, though not within sight of the living stream beyond, this truth became clear to me, and I said — "I have been idle and a dreamer. Books have been my world. From this present suffering I must be free or die; and in activity alone can I ever find forgetfulness. Now I, too, will work."

And I made up my mind to do the work for which I was fitted. I resolved to write my long-contemplated book on "The Languages and Poetry of the East."

That night my quiet rooms in the dead, old-fashioned Rue du Mont Parnasse, seemed less dreary. It was now almost winter; it had rained at intervals for many days, and the air was very chill. I found a cheerful fire in my sitting-room. The curtains shut out the dismantled garden. I drew my table to the

fireplace, trimmed my lamp, took pen and paper, and sketched the outline of my work.

My evening's occupation was followed by a night of sound refreshing sleep; and from this day I recovered rapidly. The next morning found me, for the first time, before the gloomy entrance to the old Bibliothèque Royale, then lodged in the ancient Palais du Cardinal.

I passed through the solemn court-yard, with its little garden, its mounted statue, and its air of classic stillness. I passed on to the reading-rooms, and chose a remote corner by a window. There I took my place amid a busy company, and began my life of authorship in Paris.

Day after day, week after week, I occupied the same place; followed the same train of thought; and resolutely carried out my plan of work. And work rewarded me with a portion of my lost peace. Amid those venerable archives of old learning; amid the wealth of literature amassed from antique days by Francis I., by the Medici, by the Sforzi, by the Visconti, by Petrarch — I lost for awhile the remembrance of my private sorrows.

Excluded on Sundays from the library, I generally passed those mornings in the Louvre, wandering through the galleries of antiquities; pursuing my studies of ancient history amidst the vases, mosaics, and cameos of the *Musée Grec et Egyptien;* and sometimes, though rarely, mingling with the throngs who on this day frequent the art-galleries.

As the spring-time came, I used to escape on Sunday, into the pleasant parks in the neighbour-

hood of Paris. There, in the sylvan glades of St. Cloud, among the alleys of Vincennes, or in the forest-shades of St. Germains, I used to spend long days with a book and my own thoughts. I was resigned, if not happy; and my work progressed as the weeks and months went by.

There was an attendant at the Bibliothèque Royale, in whom I took a considerable interest. He was called M. Benoit. I first remarked him for the respectability of his appearance, and for the courtliness of his address; and I was surprised one day to find that he read the oriental languages with facility.

It happened thus: — I had written the name of a rare Arabic work upon a slip of paper — as is the custom of the place — and requested him to procure it for me. He looked at it, and shook his head.

"It is useless, monsieur," he said. "That work is not in the collection. I have been often asked for it, but in vain. If monsieur will write for this work instead, I think he will find its contents very similar."

And he wrote the title of another book upon the back of my paper, and wrote it, moreover, in the Arabic characters.

"You write Arabic?" I exclaimed with amazement.

He smiled sadly.

"I was once a rich man, monsieur," he said, with a sigh, "and my education is all that I have not lost."

After this I had many conversations with M. Benoit, and he frequently visited me at my apartments in the Faubourg St. Germain. I learned that

he was the son of a wealthy builder; that he had received a learned and expensive education; that his property had been swept away in the Reign of Terror; and that during the Consulate he had obtained this subordinate situation through the interest of an early college-friend. I compared this poor old man's condition with my own, and learned a lesson from his patient cheerfulness. I found his conversation learned — often profound; and I gradually unfolded to him the plan and purpose of my book and of my opinions.

One evening I had read a chapter aloud to him, and we were arguing upon certain inductions which I had therein made from the system of Zoroaster.

"It is very strange," said M. Benoit; "but it strikes me that we have a manuscript in which the author has anticipated you on this subject."

"Indeed!" I said, with some disappointment. "I had hoped that my views were original."

"They may be original, Monsieur Henneberg, without being new," replied the old gentleman; "and I know that they are original; for the manuscript in question has never been copied, and indeed I think has never been read, excepting by myself and the writer."

"Perhaps you are the writer!" I exclaimed, hastily.

"Indeed I am not," he said; "but I knew him well — very well. He was a professor in the Collége Royale de France, and from him I received the greater part of my education in the Oriental tongues. He was a great sufferer, and he loved me

hood of Paris. There, in the sylvan glades of St. Cloud, among the alleys of Vincennes, or in the forest-shades of St. Germains, I used to spend long days with a book and my own thoughts. I was resigned, if not happy; and my work progressed as the weeks and months went by.

There was an attendant at the Bibliothèque Royale, in whom I took a considerable interest. He was called M. Benoit. I first remarked him for the respectability of his appearance, and for the courtliness of his address; and I was surprised one day to find that he read the oriental languages with facility.

It happened thus: — I had written the name of a rare Arabic work upon a slip of paper — as is the custom of the place — and requested him to procure it for me. He looked at it, and shook his head.

"It is useless, monsieur," he said. "That work is not in the collection. I have been often asked for it, but in vain. If monsieur will write for this work instead, I think he will find its contents very similar."

And he wrote the title of another book upon the back of my paper, and wrote it, moreover, in the Arabic characters.

"You write Arabic?" I exclaimed with amazement.

He smiled sadly.

"I was once a rich man, monsieur," he said, with a sigh, "and my education is all that I have not lost."

After this I had many conversations with M. Benoit, and he frequently visited me at my apartments in the Faubourg St. Germain. I learned that

he was the son of a wealthy builder; that he had received a learned and expensive education; that his property had been swept away in the Reign of Terror; and that during the Consulate he had obtained this subordinate situation through the interest of an early college-friend. I compared this poor old man's condition with my own, and learned a lesson from his patient cheerfulness. I found his conversation learned — often profound; and I gradually unfolded to him the plan and purpose of my book and of my opinions.

One evening I had read a chapter aloud to him, and we were arguing upon certain inductions which I had therein made from the system of Zoroaster.

"It is very strange," said M. Benoit; "but it strikes me that we have a manuscript in which the author has anticipated you on this subject."

"Indeed!" I said, with some disappointment. "I had hoped that my views were original."

"They may be original, Monsieur Henneberg, without being new," replied the old gentleman; "and I know that they are original; for the manuscript in question has never been copied, and indeed I think has never been read, excepting by myself and the writer."

"Perhaps you are the writer!" I exclaimed, hastily.

"Indeed I am not," he said; "but I knew him well — very well. He was a professor in the Collége Royale de France, and from him I received the greater part of my education in the Oriental tongues. He was a great sufferer, and he loved me

dearly. I was his favourite pupil — I attended his death-bed. Just before he died he gave the manuscript into my care, and bade me present it to the Bibliothèque Royale. I did so, and read it. It is utterly unknown — it lies amid thousands of others; and I believe no person has ever perused it before or since."

"I should like to see this work," I said.

"*Très bien*," he replied, "I will show it to you to-morrow."

I could not rest that night for thinking of what the old librarian had told me. I felt disquieted that another should have been before me in this path, which I had hitherto believed a virgin solitude. My self-love was wounded; and I rose in the morning feverish and unrefreshed.

Precisely as the hour of admittance arrived, I entered the reading-rooms of the library. I looked around in every direction; but M. Benoit was nowhere to be seen. I tried to read — to work; but in vain. I could not keep my attention fixed for five minutes together, and I turned my head every instant towards the door.

More than an hour elapsed before he came; but at last he entered the room and advanced to the corner where I was sitting.

"Where is the manuscript, M. Benoit?" I said, eagerly — "the manuscript on Oriental literature which you named to me last evening?"

"It is here, M. Henneberg," he replied, pointing to a packet beneath his arm. "I had some diffi-

culty in finding it, for it has lain there untouched these twenty years, or more!"

Slowly, with the tremulous fingers of age he untied the papers in which it was wrapped, and placed the manuscript before me.

I opened the leaves at random; I started back; I rubbed my eyes to make sure I was not dreaming.

The handwriting upon those pages was my own!

I think I have already said that mine was a very peculiar hand. There was no mistaking it; and here it was reproduced before my eyes, in a manuscript written, probably, years before I was born!

By a powerful effort, I mastered my emotion, and said hoarsely: —

"So it was a countryman of yours who wrote this, M. Benoit?"

"A kind friend and master of mine, M. Henneberg," replied the librarian. "Not a countryman."

"Indeed!" I said. "Was he not French?"

"*Ah, mon Dieu!* no; he was a German."

Again I started. I turned to the beginning of the manuscript; my eyes fell upon the first few sentences .... I had half expected it. Their import, though not their phraseology, corresponded precisely with the first lines of my own work!

"And pray from what part of Germany did your friend come, M. Benoit?" I asked, with forced composure.

"From the confines of Bohemia."

"And his name?"

"Karl Schmidt."

"May I ask the date of his decease?"

The old gentleman removed his glasses, and brushed a tear from his eyes.

"*Hélas, mon pauvre ami!* He died on the evening of the 4th of May, 1790."

The very date and moment of my birth.

I rose suddenly. I gasped for breath. I felt as if the ground were sinking from beneath my feet ....

"Help, my friend!" I gasped — "help! I — I am dying!"

In another moment I had fainted. I was very ill for some days after this; but as soon as I had sufficiently recovered to bear the fatigue of so long a journey, I left Paris for Leipzig. I have never since passed the boundaries of the city walls. Here, in the apartments which I occupied as a youth, I live an aged and an austere man. Here I shall soon end my "strange eventful history."

Such is the story of my life — a life cursed and withered by glimpses of a past, which is known only to God. I have remembered scenes and people; I have beheld palpable evidences and traces of myself in former stages of my being. Whereunto do these things tend? Will death bring me to a full knowledge of these mysteries? or is this spiritual particle, which men call the soul, destined to migrate eternally from shape to shape, never rising to a higher and diviner immortality? Alas! I know not; neither, friend, canst thou reply to me. Life is

a problem; Death, perchance, a word! Will no hand lift the curtain of eternity?

It was nearly dusk by the time I had arrived at the end of the Professor's MSS., and the castle and church-spires of Gotha were already in sight. Presently the diligence stopped at an inn in the town; a party of young men surrounded the novel-reading student, and bore him off with tumultuous congratulations. The priest alighted, and wished me a civil good evening; and I went to the nearest inn and dined execrably. When I returned to the vehicle to resume my night journey, I found the three vacant places already occupied by three new passengers, and so went on towards Frankfort. About a fortnight after, I went to Baden-Baden, and liked the place so well that I stayed there for some weeks. One day, sitting idly in the salle à manger of the Hotel Suisse, I happened to take up a copy of "Galignani's Messenger." One of the first things that caught my eye was the following announcement —

"MAY, 1854.

"Died suddenly, on the evening of the 4th inst., in his chambers, at the College of ——, in Leipzig, Heinrich Henneberg, Professor of Oriental Literature, in the 65th year of his age; greatly beloved and regretted."

And so this was the end. Dead! and on the anniversary of his birth! Some people to whom I

have read the foregoing memoir, say that
things are coincidences, and that too much l
touched my poor friend's brain. It may be
there was a strange method in his madness a
and who can tell what revelations in psy
may yet be in store for future generations?

CHAPTER VI.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE HOFFMANN.

My earliest recollections — and they are of many years ago, for I am no longer young — carry me back to a dark and dirty room in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane. The ceiling was smoke-stained, the paper faded and torn, and the windows, which were never cleaned, admitted no prospect and scarcely any sunshine. There was a battered pianoforte in one corner, of that old-fashioned kind which I knew afterwards was called a clavecin. This was loaded with heaps of yellow dusty music. There were also a bass viol, several violins, and my father's music-desk, for he was a musician, and played in the orchestra at Drury Lane Theatre. I also recollect that a portrait of Mrs. Billington, and a print of David Garrick, were suspended from the walls, and that my father's easychair was generally occupied by a large black cat, the dearest playfellow of my childhood.

I was a lonely, motherless, neglected little creature, without amusement and without education. I could not read. There were some dusty volumes lying about, with curious frontispieces, and portraits of a past generation of actors in strange dresses, scattered at long intervals amid their pages. These

I used to look at day by day with hopeless admiration, while I turned over leaf after leaf of those mysterious printed characters which had no meaning for my eyes. I used to see my father reading the newspaper on a Sunday morning, and sometimes smiling over its contents. I never dared to ask him if I might learn to do the same; for he was harsh and cold; but I have sat for many a silent hour and watched the motion of his eyes along the lines with inexpressible longing.

I have said that these are my earliest recollections; but I seemed even then to have dim remembrances, broken and shadowy enough, of a time long before. Fragments of old rhymes and fairy stories floated in my mind, mingled with the tones of a soft voice; and I loved to connect these scattered links with the weavings of my own fancy. Sometimes, too, when I was lying in my bed, with the moonlight streaming in through the uncurtained window, I woke from pleasant dreams, in which I seemed to see a gentle face, forgotten, yet familiar; and then slept to dream again.

I was very young at this time; not more, I should fancy, than seven years of age; but I never knew the exact date of my birth, nor do I now. The house in which we lived was let out from kitchen to attic. The ground-floor and shop belonged to a Jew, who made up clothing for the stage, and kept all kinds of hideous masks, glittering dresses, swords and fearful things, for hire. If ever I went out into the street, I hurried past his door with uncontrollable terror. I cannot, even now, recall without a

hudder the hideous laugh with which he used to reet my flying steps, or the way in which he lay n wait for my return, thrusting his yellow face hrough the half-opened door, and asking me if I vould not give one little kiss to old Solomon!

I had a beautiful voice. I used to sing all the ong day, and delighted, in my father's absence, to epeat, in my clear childish treble, the airs I heard im practising upon the violin. From daily exercise n this amusement, I attained to such proficiency hat I could warble the most difficult bravura pas-ages with perfect fluency.

One morning as I was singing, the door opened lowly and softly, and a gentleman looked in.

"Go on, my dear," said he, with the kindest mile in the world; "go on, and sing that pretty une again for me."

I was silent.

"What! quite dumb?" said he, coming over and aking a seat opposite to me. "Well, if you will ot sing, tell me your name."

The gentleman's voice and eyes were so pleasant, hat I contrived to stammer: —

"Alice Hoffmann."

He looked surprised, and told me that he knew ay father quite well; but had never supposed he ad a little girl like me. And then he took me on is knee, and kissed my cheek, and shewed me his vatch; and so winning my confidence with gentle vords, persuaded me to sing to him again. He istened to me very attentively; and when I had lone, asked me to repeat the song. My childish

vanity was pleased for the first time, and I sung one of my father's brilliant pieces.

"Thank you, Alice," he said, at the close of my second performance. "You are a good child. Now I will sing you a song in return."

And instantly the gentleman assumed the most comical expression I had ever seen, placed his hands on his knees, and began to sing. I have now no recollection of the words or the air, but I remember dancing and rolling about in ecstasies of mirth. He seemed to tie up every feature into knots, his mouth extended itself from ear to ear, and he poured forth his words as if he had a dozen tongues.

In the midst of my shrill peals of laughter, the door opened suddenly, and my father walked in. The stranger started, and his face instantly returned to its previous good-natured repose. The merriment died away upon my lips. My father looked sternly amazed, reddened, and bowed with some formality.

"You are surprised to find me here, Hoffmann," said the visitor; "but I came to see Solomon down-stairs about some properties, and hearing your child's voice overhead, I stole up-stairs to listen to her."

"It is a poor place, Mr. Grimaldi," said my father, proudly.

"Poor, with this little treasure in it!" exclaimed Mr. Grimaldi, taking me by the hand; "I should think my home rich if I possessed her! What a magnificent voice the child has!"

"Indeed!" said my father, with a glance of cold surprise. "I never heard her sing a note!"

The strange gentleman whistled and stared, and

he was the son of a wealthy builder; that he had received a learned and expensive education; that his property had been swept away in the Reign of Terror; and that during the Consulate he had obtained this subordinate situation through the interest of an early college-friend. I compared this poor old man's condition with my own, and learned a lesson from his patient cheerfulness. I found his conversation learned — often profound; and I gradually unfolded to him the plan and purpose of my book and of my opinions.

One evening I had read a chapter aloud to him, and we were arguing upon certain inductions which I had therein made from the system of Zoroaster.

"It is very strange," said M. Benoit; "but it strikes me that we have a manuscript in which the author has anticipated you on this subject."

"Indeed!" I said, with some disappointment. "I had hoped that my views were original."

"They may be original, Monsieur Henneberg, without being new," replied the old gentleman; "and I know that they are original; for the manuscript in question has never been copied, and indeed I think has never been read, excepting by myself and the writer."

"Perhaps you are the writer!" I exclaimed, hastily.

"Indeed I am not," he said; "but I knew him well — very well. He was a professor in the Collége Royale de France, and from him I received the greater part of my education in the Oriental tongues. He was a great sufferer, and he loved me

It might have been perhaps three weeks after Mr. Grimaldi's visit, when the following events took place.

It was winter-time. My father was out as usual. I had a scanty fire burning in the grate, which the old woman who waited on the lodgers from time to time replenished. I was not permitted to have a candle, so I used to sit singing, or strumming on the old clavecin by the faint firelight, till I felt tired or sorrowful enough to go up-stairs to bed. This night I happened to be very weary, so I raked the ashes out somewhat earlier than usual, crept up softly to my room, and soon fell into a profound and dreamless sleep.

I might have been there some three or four hours, when I was roused by a heavy hand upon my shoulder, and a bright light before my eyes.

"Alice," said a stern loud voice. "Alice, get up directly!"

I was so terrified and confused, that I scarcely knew where I was, and began to cry.

"Stop that noise, child," said my father, in a deep voice that I used to dread. "Get up and dress directly. Do you hear? Be quick!"

And giving me a parting shake, he laid the candle down, and left the room.

Breathless, weeping, and frightened, I obeyed his directions. The night was very cold, and seemed to pierce through me. I strove to wash the traces of tears from my cheeks, and glanced at the window. All without was intensely black, and a thick mist

was drizzling against the panes. I heard my father's step upon the stairs.

"Are you ready?" asked the imperious voice.

I was ready; so I went down-stairs, and there I found my father and another person. The stranger was a large man with a red, cross face, and a coarse voice; and I felt afraid of him.

"Is this the child?" said he. "She's very small."

"So much the better, sir," said my father; "the greater wonder."

"What may be her age now?" asked the stranger.

"Six or seven, I suppose," replied my father, with an odd smile; "but we'll call it five, Mr. Smith, or four if you like it better. No one will be likely to search the register."

And then they both laughed; but I was ready to cry again, for very terror. I believe my fears were chiefly that I was going to be sold and carried away — so mere a child was I then!

"Well, Hoffmann, let's hear her first," said the stranger, when he had done laughing.

"Sing a song, Alice," said my father; "and mind, if you behave now as you did the other day, I'll turn you out of doors into the street!"

The alarm which this threat occasioned me had the effect of giving me a sort of desperate courage. I sang, I know not what; but the stranger nodded his head and rubbed his hands; and my father, instead of scolding me, talked earnestly with him in an under-tone for some minutes.

"Then it is settled, Smith," said my father, triumphantly; "and when shall we begin?"

"No time like the present," said Mr. Smith. "Let her begin to-night."

"To-night!" exclaimed my father; "but it's past eleven!"

"No matter — they never go till three or four in the morning."

"Put on your bonnet, child," said my father. "We are going out."

Oh! how wet, and cold, and slippery it was out in the dark streets! Not a shop was open — scarcely a creature stirring, save now and then a solitary watchman. I remember that dreadful night as well as if it were yesterday: the standing pools of water in the pavement — the long dark streets — the flickering oil-lamps — the misty rain that clung to my hair, and wet my clothes nearly through — the cold raw wind, and the coaches that once or twice rattled past us on the way. It was a long, long distance that we went — and I thought we never should arrive. Then we crossed a bridge over a broad river, with the rain misting down upon the water, and stopped at last before the door of a large shop, with all its shutters closed, and a lamp hanging outside. Mr. Smith knocked heavily upon the door, and a sleepy-looking man opened it and admitted us. The moment we were inside, I heard a great noise of people talking and laughing, a jingling of glasses, and a sound like hammering upon wood.

"Alice," said my father, stooping down and putting his lips close to my ear, "you are going to sing presently. Do your best, and you shall have a doll; break down, and —"

He said no more, but his voice and look were enough.

In another moment I found myself in a room full of company, and brilliantly lighted. At first, the noise, the heated atmosphere, the glare, the clouds of tobacco-smoke, and the terror I felt, deprived me of all power of observation; but when some moments had elapsed, I began to look round and examine the features of my audience. My father had taken a seat near the door, and I was placed beside him. Mr. Smith was a long way off at the head of the table, and his appearance was welcomed with a great rattling of glasses. The company consisted of some twenty-five or thirty men; and most of them looked merry and good-natured.

Then Mr. Smith stood up, and said something about my father, and a great deal about me; and I was called upon to sing. I distinctly recollect an old gentleman lifting me up, and placing me standing on a chair, that I might be seen and heard. In doing so, he found how cold and wet I was, and gave me something to taste out of his glass. Whatever it was, it did me good at the time; the faces around me looked smiling and pleasant, and I sang as well as I could. Then there was such a shouting, and jingling, and clapping, that I was almost frightened at first, and thought the gentlemen were angry; but I found, instead, that they wanted another song. Then I sang again, and, having another sip from my friend's tumbler, felt merry and warm, and became quite happy.

I do not know how many times I could have

sung that night; but at last my father said I should not go on any longer, so I was carried into another room, and laid upon a sofa, where I soon fell sound asleep. Almost all the gentlemen had given me money when I was taken away, and many had kissed me, and said: "Goodnight, little one;" and my heart was lighter, and my pocket heavier than I had ever known either before.

The next morning, very early, my father took me home, and at night we went again. He was now kinder to me than usual; but I was not permitted to keep the money I nightly received, and I never had the doll.

I cannot tell how long I continued to sing at the tavern. The first night seems burnt into my memory, with its hopes and fears, griefs and pleasures; but of the succeeding evenings my recollection is very imperfect. They seem all blended confusedly together; but I imagine, from the seasons of the year, that I must have been in the regular habit of going there for at least six months, when an event occurred that changed the whole course of my life.

It was summer-time. I was at home in the middle of the day, when Mr. Grimaldi, whom I had never seen since the first time he came, entered the room abruptly, and sat down beside me.

"Little Alice," said he, and his kind face was pale and troubled, "you must put on your bonnet and come out with me."

I timidly said that I dared not, for I had to go out with my father at night.

"Ah! yes — I know — poor child, poor child," he muttered; "what a life! — what degradation! But, indeed, you must come, Alice. I am going to take you to my house, and we have no time to lose."

I longed to go with him; but I was afraid my father would be angry.

"No, Alice," he replied very gravely; "your father will not be angry, my child."

So I went. There was a chaise at the door into which he lifted me, and we drove rapidly away. As we turned the corner of the street, I saw a crowd coming along, surrounding four watchmen, who were carrying what seemed to me to be a sleeping man upon a narrow board; but Mr. Grimaldi laid his hand suddenly over my eyes, and I felt the hand tremble. When he removed it we were in another street, and the crowd had disappeared. I asked him why he did so; but he made no reply. We then went along many streets and roads, and out into the country, among green fields, and lanes, and cottages; and stopped at last at the door of a pretty house, where a lady came out and welcomed us. She looked surprised at seeing me, but her husband whispered in her ear, and then she kissed me too, and took me into the garden. She seemed very kind, but also very sorry for me; and that I could not understand. It was a happy day, and I was delighted with everything I saw; but I dreaded every moment lest I should hear my father's angry voice inquiring for me; and this fear damped all my enjoyment.

But I never heard that voice in praise or blame again. My father was not angry with me for going away with Mr. Grimaldi into the green fields. He was dead, and that was his body I had seen borne along the streets, on its way home from the theatre.

III.

Although my father had never shown me any great affection, I was as much grieved at hearing of my loss as any child can be that does not understand the meaning of that strange word — death. But Mr. and Mrs. Grimaldi were such kind and gentle friends, that I fear I soon forgot him. At first, too, I am ashamed to say, I regretted the nightly excitement of the tavern — the cakes, the presents, the applause.

Mrs. Grimaldi was the first to discover how utterly ignorant I was; and I often heard her speaking with her husband on the subject. One day when he came home after a morning rehearsal at Drury Lane, he called me to him, and taking me upon his knee, said: —

"Little Alice, you are going to school."

"Away from here?" I cried in terror, for I was perfectly happy now, and never wished to leave my adopted home.

"Yes, Alice," said he kindly; "a long way from here. Don't cry, my darling; people must learn to read and write; and I have been speaking about you at the theatre among your poor father's old

friends, and they have all offered to pay for your going to a beautiful school, where music is taught, and where you will learn to make good use of that pretty voice of yours. Don't cry, Alice" — for I was sobbing as if my heart would break. "You will be very happy, for there are many learners in this school, all of whom will be players and singers by-and-by; and it is in a beautiful country called Germany."

"But can't I come and see you every Sunday, Mr. Grimaldi?" said I, clasping my arms about his neck, and weeping still.

My friend laughed, and told me that it was impossible; for Germany was a great way off across the sea. And then he told me about vineyards and castles, and the river Rhine; and soon made me forget my grief in the prospect of departure.

However, when the time came that I must go, I was almost distracted with sorrow. I was taken in a coach from Finchley, where Mr. Grimaldi lived, back to London, and through some dirty streets to a dark gloomy wharf, where was a trading-vessel, crowded with busy sailors, bales of goods, and noisy porters. My kind friend put me on board, kissed me a great many times, and with tears in his eyes bade me farewell.

I was very unhappy; and after we had set sail, very ill. I remember lying in my berth, and crying for grief and sickness through many days and nights. At length the motion of the ship grew less uneasy, and one morning, when I awoke, the vessel was quite still. We had arrived at Antwerp.

There was a great noise on board, for the vessel was unlading; and when I ventured up on deck, the captain told me rather gruffly that I had better keep down in the cabin till he could take me on shore.

By-and-by he came for me, and we went across a large quay, where there were a great many people, all speaking a strange tongue; so that I was quite frightened, and clung to the captain's hand. Then he took me to a tavern, where we dined with a number of other people at a long table, and he told me it was a table d'hôte; but I did not know what that meant, unless it had something to do with the dinner, where we had jam with our meat and vegetables, and thin soup and sour cabbages, none of which I liked at all.

After this we went to a coach-office, where he paid some money for me; and then into a yard, where a great unwieldy vehicle was standing. There the captain gave me a ticket, which he said secured my place all the way; a paper in a little case, which he told me was my passport; a purse with some money; and a bag of sweet biscuits. Then he put me into a comfortable corner, shook my hand very kindly, bade me good-bye and went away.

Now I was more lonely than ever. It was already evening. Two or three other passengers took their places inside, but not one spoke a word of English. The hostlers and postboys shouted; the horses made a great clattering, and away we went. I soon fell asleep, waking only now and then to find that it was dark night, and that all my compa-

nions were asleep likewise. The next morning we got out at a dirty inn, in a dirty village, and had breakfast. Then we went on again for many weary miles, over a flat dull country with canals and windmills, and great herds of cattle, over and over again.

So, with the same routine, we travelled for some days; when one morning we all had to show our passports, and allow our boxes to be opened by a company of soldiers. I afterwards knew that we then passed the frontier, and went into Germany; but at the time I could not tell what it all meant, and discerned no difference in the strange language.

The scenery thenceforth became more beautiful, and for the first time I beheld mountains, vineyards, and waterfalls. But the perpetual travelling wearied me so much, that at last I scarcely heeded where we went.

At length we came one evening to a pretty town with churches and white buildings, at the foot of a steep acclivity; and here they made me understand that I was to alight, and that the name of the town was Schwartzenfelden.

I was put down at a large hotel, my box was deposited by my side, the coach rolled away through the narrow streets, and I was left alone. Presently a waiter came out, and led me into the house. In the entrance-hall I found a man, who took my box in one hand and me by the other, and so went out and along the streets.

We presently stopped before a large white mansion. I was shown into a spacious parlour, where

an elderly lady and a number of young girls were sitting at needlework. The lady rose and took my hand between both of hers.

"And so you are our little new friend, Alice Hoffmann?" she said kindly. "You come in good time; for we were just going to supper, and I daresay you are hungry after your long journey."

She then helped me to change my dusty traveling-clothes, and took me back to the sitting-room, where we supped.

When the meal was over, the youngest of the party read prayers aloud in German, and the lady handed me a book.

"There is an English psalm-book for you, my child," she said, kindly; and I blushed; for I could not read, and I was ashamed to say so.

I saw her glance keenly at me, and then at the book, and I felt that she had guessed my secret; but she said nothing. When we rose from our knees, she kissed us all upon both cheeks, and we went to bed. There was one young girl who could speak a little English, and she occupied the bed next to mine. She told me that the eldest scholars slept in this dormitory, and that I was placed with them because it was feared I might be teased by those of my own age, none of whom understood a word of my language. She told me, also, that our matron's name was Madame Kloss; that we lived in the dominions of the Grand Duke Wilhelm of Schwartzenfelden; and — and — a great deal more, but I fell asleep to the sound of her voice.

IV.

I pass over those years of education, school pleasures, and school griefs, that, like a bridge, unite child-life to womanhood. The sketch of a day, of a week, suffices for a record of years. Time passed gently on; and amid the same round of occupations, the same friends, the same teachers, and, with few exceptions, the same schoolfellows, I grew in age and knowledge, till the lapse of ten happy years found me in the first bloom of youth and hope. My voice, from the first, had been held in high estimation by our singing-master. Ten years of skilful tuition had developed it into a soprano of such sweetness, flexibility, and compass as, it was said, had never before been heard within the walls of the academy.

Nor, though the education afforded by the academy was expressly musical, were the more plain, and not less necessary, branches of knowledge neglected. French, English, and Italian were taught in the best manner; and, of course, writing, arithmetic, history and geography. On Sundays we all went hand-in-hand to the neighbouring church, and with our youthful voices swelled the solemn hymns and sweet responses. In the evening we read aloud by turns from the Bible. On Wednesdays, we had a half-holiday, when we made little excursions to the forest or the river-side; and at night we had hot *kuchen* for supper.

Such was the school when I entered it — a lonely, ignorant, fatherless child, sent thither by the bounty of strangers. Such was it at the time when I resume my narrative, when I was perhaps seventeen or eighteen years of age. I had heard at long intervals during this period from my kind friend and patron, Mr. Grimaldi, and always with the same unwearied kindness and paternal solicitude. His letters told of many changes — of domestic sorrow, of sickness, of a checkered and a fatiguing life. At last they ceased altogether; and after a time I heard that he was dead. I grieved much for him, and often. To this day, I think of him with love and gratitude. So ended my connection, for life, with the country of my birth.

Herr Stolberg was one of the finest musicians in Germany. He held the appointment of chapel-master to the Grand Duke, and examined the classes of the academy once in every month. We were all in great awe of his red ribbon, his quick black eyes, his harsh voice, and his impatient temper. His compositions were singularly beautiful. He had studied under Beethoven, won the golden medal at the Strasbourg Festival, and had lately produced a cantata on the anniversary of the Grand Duke's wedding-day.

I was sitting one morning in the class-room with some of my elder school-fellows, when the door opened suddenly, and Herr Stolberg walked in, preceded by Madame Kloss. He laid his hat on a table, and drew a paper from his pocket.

"Ladies," he said in his quick, decisive tone,

"I have the honour to inform you that, in consequence of the departure of Mademoiselle Uhden for Berlin, there will shortly be a vacancy for a first soprano in the choir of the Ducal Chapel. It is the gracious pleasure of His Highness the Grand Duke to select a lady from this academy to fill the situation; and I am therefore directed to announce to you, that as many as desire to compete will be heard on this day week in the music-room of the institution. A selection from the *Messiah* of Handel and the *Creation* of Haydn has been appointed for each candidate to sing; and His Highness will attend in person at your performance."

With this, Herr Stolberg laid the music-list on the desk of Madame Kloss; bowed once more all round; and left the room as abruptly as he had entered it.

I need not say what an excitement raged among the soprani of the Schwartzenfelden Academy during the week that succeeded this announcement. Many of the girls said that it was useless to compete with me, since I had the finest voice there. But they practised, nevertheless; and nothing was heard from morning till night but the selections from Haydn and Handel. For my part, I scarcely sang a note. I felt that rest and thought would aid me better than practice.

The week passed by, and the day of trial came. In the morning, I went out and wandered by myself in the wood that lay beyond the town. Here all was so still — so holy. Confidence and peace passed suddenly into my breast. I wept. I could

have sung then, and sung as I had for days but faintly pictured to myself. But I would not break the enchanted silence of the place. I hastened back to the academy, and waited in the library till I was summoned to dress for the evening. There were five competitors besides myself. Three sang very well, and the other two indifferently. The best was a young girl named Rebecca Leo. Her father was a Jewish merchant of great reputed wealth. Rebecca was not very happy in the school. Many of the pupils avoided the Jewess, whose father they called *Der Wucherer*. We had often done each other little kindnesses. She was lonely; I pitied her, and she loved me dearly.

At six o'clock we were in the music hall. Herr Stolberg sat at the piano; the students occupied benches at the extremity of the room; Madame Kloss and the teachers were ranged along one side of the platform, and we, the performers, at the other. At a quarter past six the Grand Duke entered with his suite; the list of our names was placed before him; and we began. My name was fourth in succession, so I had some little time to wait. I became painfully nervous. At length a gentle hand was laid upon my arm.

"It is your turn, Alice," said Rebecca.

I rose and crossed to the piano. The Grand Duke looked at me through his double opera-glass. I thought I should have fallen; and laid my hand upon the instrument for support. A hand was laid upon it and instantly withdrawn. I turned, and saw Herr Stolberg gazing at me with an unwonted

cordiality in his dark eyes. He pretended to be arranging some music near where my hand was laid.

"Fear nothing, Fräulein Alice," he muttered in a low voice. "You will succeed."

This unexpected encouragement from the formidable *maestro* almost took away my breath. In another moment he had commenced the symphony, and I began. I was so terrified that I know not how I sang the opening bars; indeed, I have no recollection of singing them at all. I was in a whirlwind — concert-room, Grand Duke, music, all vanished from before my eyes. After a few moments, I seemed to hear the silver tones of my own voice rising above the accompaniment, like a bird from the forest — as if some other person were singing, and I were listening. Gradually this sensation left me. I fancied myself once more in the still wood; the sense and majesty of the words seemed again unfolded to me; and my enthusiasm poured itself forth in that inspired song in which the people of Zion are bidden to "rejoice greatly!"

When I had concluded, my heart was beating, it is true, but no longer with apprehension. The other five looked from me to one another; the eyes of Madame Kloss were full of tears; and a burst of half-uttered bravos proceeded from the end of the hall where the male students were seated.

"Was I not right, Fräulein Alice?" said Herr Stolberg, as he came over to me, after speaking for a moment with the Grand Duke. "Take my arm, that I may introduce you to his Highness. You are elected."

V.

With the appointment of first soprano to the Chapel Royal, I also received that of subprofessor of singing to the academy. I was consequently removed from the pupil's dormitory, and allowed a separate bed-chamber, with a sitting-room attached. In the latter a small piano was placed for my accommodation, and I was henceforth permitted, by the laws of the academy, to take private pupils. I had five or six before three weeks had elapsed. This unusual good fortune was in some measure the result of my chapel appointment; for, on the departure of Mademoiselle Uhden, three families instantly transferred their patronage to me, as her successor.

Life was now all happiness, and fate smiled upon me. His Highness repeatedly honoured me with his approbation, and the Grand Duchess frequently sent for me after evening service, to sing her favourite *morceaux* from the oratorios of Handel, and the masses of Mozart. They were a very unassuming, domestic couple — dignified, it is true, but glad to lay aside the ceremonies of state, and ever ready themselves to take part in a glee or motett. At last, it became the rule for me to attend in the drawing-room every Sunday evening; and as Herr Stolberg was likewise invited, we went together. Thus we came to be — I had almost said, friends; but that is not the word; for though the

great *maestro* was, in his abrupt way, kind and even familiar, I could never forget his fame, his superior knowledge, and the dignity of his appointment in the palace. Besides, he was forty years of age, and to a girl of seventeen that appears no inconsiderable seniority. But there is another person whom I have hitherto delayed to name. I would break off even now, rather than . . . . But hesitation is useless, and I can avoid the subject no longer.

The Baron von Bachhoffen, master of the horse to his Highness the Grand Duke, was the youngest nobleman in the royal suite. I never sang in the chapel but I saw him there; my attendance was never commanded at the palace but he was there also. The families where I taught were frequently invited to the royal circle. I seldom went to their houses, but I encountered him either going or coming; and sometimes he would visit them when he knew that I was giving the lesson. It would be useless for me to deny that these silent attentions dwelt more upon my mind than I would then confess even to myself. I tried not to think of them; I left myself no idle moments; I read, practised, conversed more than ever with my young friends in the academy, and fancied I should succeed in banishing his image from my mind. The baron was very young — not yet of age. He was fair, boyishly fair, and his clear blue eyes wore an expression of tenderness that sank strangely into my heart. Besides, he was the most accomplished gentleman of the court — the best rider, the finest shot, the most graceful dancer in the minuet, the

readiest wit, the sweetest singer. It is no wonder that he should win the heart of an obscure foreigner, whose only recommendations were her youth, her innocence, and her voice.

At the palace it was found that his voice harmonised deliciously with mine; and when but a few were present, and the evening was very private, his Highness used often to request that the baron would be so obliging as to sing a duet from the *Creation* or the *Mount of Olives*, with Mademoiselle Hoffmann.

Oh the bright, bright dream of my youth! One day he took my hand in his and kissed it, as we stood in a recess half hidden by a curtain, looking over some music in an ante-room at the palace. I felt that kiss upon my hand for days; and that night his face and voice were with me in my dreams.

The time came at last when I found it was of no avail to endeavour to exclude him from my thoughts. I might as well have tried to separate the daylight from the day. His looks, his gentle acts of tenderness and devotion, his low voice, all told me that he loved me. Once assured of this unspoken attachment, I gave my whole heart without reserve to the fascinations of first love.

From this time it seemed to me as if there were a double life and beauty in every created thing. I drank in joy from every sight and sound. The spring flowers wore a brighter hue, and exhaled a sweeter perfume; the morning air breathed a thousand scents and sounds unknown before; the songs

of the birds spoke a new language to my ears. I used to sit and dream for hours on the last words he had whispered, or the last pressure of his hand. I would close my eyes, and strive to recall every feature of his beloved face. Life was a dream — a happy, happy dream!

About this time Herr Stolberg's manner altered to me. He was not less friendly, but he was more polite. There was constraint in his looks, in his manner, in the very tones of his voice. I asked myself what I had done to displease him; but could remember nothing. Once or twice I had fancied that he looked upon me with an expression almost of pity in his eyes; and one morning I could have believed that they were full of tears. I would have given the world to say to him: "Friend, how have I angered you?" but his perfectly cool and polite manner would admit of no question.

The Grand Duke's birthday came round. A festival and concert were held at the palace in the evening. I was engaged with one or two others of the choir; and the pupils of the academy attended to sing the choruses. The concert-room opened upon the grounds by a beautiful marble terrace, and a broad flight of steps. Sitting on the platform surrounded by instruments and singers, I turned my eyes often and wearily towards the garden beyond, and longed to escape amid its quiet alleys. A long cantata, composed by the Grand Duke, and listened to with courteous attention by his guests, constituted the musical entertainment of the evening. It was dull and uninteresting; and by the time the last

notes of the royal composition had died away, I was thankful to retreat to an inner room till the audience had dispersed. When all were gone to the ball-room, I wrapt a shawl about me, and stole out into the dark night.

It was autumn. The leaves were golden on the trees, and a warm odorous breeze filled the still night with beauty. The moon and stars shone brightly overhead; the air fanned my burning cheeks; and I took a shady turning amid the trees, and wandered slowly to and fro. That night the gardens were like a fairy scene. Lines of many-coloured lamps hung like fruit upon the branches of the acacias, which, cut in formal long alleys, seemed to stretch away into the dim distance. I went dreamily on; the strange calm and beauty of the place lulled me into a reverie, and I heard not the step that came behind me down the pathway.

"A lovely night," said the dearest voice in all the world, close at my side. "A night for poetry and love."

I felt the hot blood fly to my face and then retreat again. I knew that I became very pale; but that he could not see my pallor. I trembled; but he should not know it.

"A lovely night, indeed, your excellency," I said, as firmly as I could.

He observed the tremor I struggled to conceal.

"You are ill, mademoiselle?"

"I thank your excellency. I am well."

"I have been seeking you, mademoiselle," he said in a low earnest voice — "I have been seeking

you all through the palace and gardens; I wished to speak with you. I have looked forward to this night for many weeks in the hope of doing so."

He paused, but I remained quite silent. I could hear the throbbings of my own heart in the stillness; but he heard them not. He continued: —

"I would say three words, mademoiselle, that must long since have been written too plainly on my face — have mingled too audibly with the tones of my voice — have spoken too visibly in my every action, to need a more distinct avowal. Yet here let me speak them — here, amid darkness and silence — here, amid the whispering trees, beneath the everlasting sky — here, before God and the stars! I risk my peace, my future, my happiness, my all, and say — I love you!"

Again he paused for a moment. He drew nearer to me; his voice, which had been soft and low, became quick and passionate.

"Alice, I have spoken — but not all. One question remains to be asked — my life hangs on your answer. Will you be my wife? . . . . Not a word? — not a token? Speak to me, dearest, speak!"

I could not speak; but his arm was round me, and his burning kisses were on my lips.

"Answer me — answer me!"

I withdrew myself from his arms; I took his hand between both of mine, bowed down, and kissed it.

It was all my answer; but he interpreted it.

VI.

He was my sovereign — my king! My love for him was almost a religion. I feared sometimes that it was all a dream, and shuddered lest I should awake from it. My love became idolatry. He gave me his portait, and I prayed with it in my hands. I would not have changed life then for paradise. I lived for him — him only. Did I forget my God in so worshipping His creature, and was I chastised for it?

It was soon known throughout the town that the Fräulein Hoffmann, who sang in the royal chapel, was betrothed to the young Baron Theodore von Bachhoffen, master of the horse to his Highness the Grand Duke. Madame Kloss was as proud and happy as though she had been my mother; the pupils brought me flowers, gifts, and copies of verses; the masters offered me their formal congratulations. Herr Stolberg alone was silent. He seemed as if he neither saw nor heard anything of the event. When Madame Kloss, one morning, thinking that he must yet be in ignorance, told him in a half-audible voice of the betrothal of her dear Alice, he replied drily, that he was already aware of the circumstance, and turned away. I will not deny that I felt grieved and slighted; but I was too happy to be troubled long by this, or any other circumstance not bearing upon my love.

Thus it went on, and the winter time came

back. He would be of age in the early spring, and our marriage was appointed for the day of his majority.

During this interval, I received one morning a short and formal note from Herr Stolberg, requesting leave to wait upon me immediately. He followed my permission in a few moments; and as he entered my little parlour, I observed that he looked pale, and that he held a letter in his hand. I rose and placed a seat for him; but he muttered a few unintelligible words, placed the letter open before me, and began pacing nervously up and down the room.

It was written in French, and purported to be from one of his oldest friends, now the manager of the Italian Opera in Paris. He was in need of a first soprano — a prima donna — to commence the season till the arrival of Madame Malibran from London. Herr Stolberg had mentioned me in his letters; he felt that he could rely on his friend's judgment; he requested him to communicate with me; and he offered eight thousand francs for the season.

The characters swam before my eyes. I could scarce believe in such good fortune. I read the letter several times before I could speak a word.

"Does the Fräulein Hoffmann accept or decline?" asked the chapel-master, stopping suddenly in his walk, and standing before me.

"I accept! — accept most gladly. That is, if . . . ."

The thought that Theodore might object to my

appearance on the stage rushed suddenly over my mind. A strange feeling of reluctance to speak his name made me hesitate and blush.

Herr Stolberg made a movement with his hand for me to continue.

"I must have a day to consider," I said, falteringly.

"Yet a moment since you were decided!"

"True; but — but" — I felt it must be said, so turning partly aside — "I must consult other wishes than my own," I replied. "I must mention it to . . . ."

"To the Baron von Bachhoffen!" said the chapel-master in a low voice. "Oh, Fräulein Alice, if you believe in my friendship, if you would requite it, do not mention this letter to the baron till after nine o'clock to-night. It is the first favour I have asked from you; I implore you to grant it!"

His voice was agitated, and his utterance rapid. I was frightened by his strange vehemence.

"Promise me, Fräulein — promise me!"

His look was so beseeching, and so earnest, that I said: —

"Well, I promise; but only till after nine o'clock to-night."

"Be here in readiness to receive me," said the chapel-master in the same hurried tone; but lower still, as if he feared to be overheard. "Be here at six or seven o'clock. I will then call upon you again. I must find you alone, and you must place yourself in my hands for a single hour. Speak no

word of this or of the letter till the time promised. Be silent. Farewell!"

I bowed my head in assent. In an instant he was gone. The day dragged heavily on, and every hour seemed longer than the last. It rained, and the rain was mingled with snow. At six I repaired to my own apartments, to receive him when he should arrive. I tried to read; but in vain. I could only pace the room; look out through the blurred windows on the dark wet gardens, and listen to the wind and rain. A sensation of vague terror crept over me; and when the town clocks chimed the hour, I listened to their harsh tongues as though they had been the tongues of fate.

Another dreary half hour crept away; I heard the bell rung, and the courtyard gate half opened — a familiar voice spoke my name — a quick foot trod on the stairs.

"I am late, Fräulein Alice," said the chapel-master, as he entered hastily and closed the door behind him; "and there is no time to be lost. You must go out with me for an hour."

He was pale — very pale. The snow and rain were trickling from his cloak upon the floor, and his black locks hung in wet masses upon his sallow cheeks.

I folded a heavy cloak about me, and drew a close bonnet and veil over my face.

"I am ready," I said.

We went down the stairs, and passed the door of Madame Kloss's room.

"Shall I not tell madame?" I asked, as we went by.

He shook his head, hurried me on across the wet courtyard, and through the gates into the street. The porter stared inquisitively, and touched his hat as we passed by.

Although it was so early, none were stirring in the streets save a few soldiers and market-women. The churches looked dim and lofty, and the thick rain came steadily down. Through many dark by-ways and narrow turnings we went. The chapel-master walked fast, unheeding the pools of water that lay upon the path. My feet were cold, and wet through. I thought of the night when I had so gone through the streets of London — a night as inclement as this. I almost fancied I was acting the same scene over again, and under the same circumstances, when we stopped before a low door, with a fantastically carved overhanging porch. The house was small; not a light was visible from any of the windows; three gloomy trees, stripped of their foliage, swung their branches mournfully before the door; and a dog began barking furiously within. Herr Stolberg tapped gently at the window; there was a sound of chains and bolts; the door opened slowly, and a female stood upon the threshold. She took me by the hand and led me along the passage, while Herr Stolberg, who seemed to know the way, followed softly behind. It was profoundly dark. She guided us to a room; and, saying that she would bring a light, went out and closed the door. I shook convulsively from head to foot.

"Fear nothing, Fräulein Alice," said my friend, taking my hand gently in his own — "Heavens! you are ill!"

"I am cold — nothing more," I replied faintly.

"Cold — cold and wet," he exclaimed in a suppressed and broken voice. "My God! You will be ill — ill and through me!"

"Hush!" I replied; "it is nothing. See, here comes the light."

A bright line of radiance streamed under the door. The woman entered with a lamp in her hand. It was Rebecca Leo! She placed her finger on her lips to stay the exclamation that was rising to mine, and, pressing my cold cheek to hers, whispered: —

"Hush! this is my father's house, Alice. Would that you had never crossed its threshold for this purpose! You must stand here, in the window. I will draw the curtains before you, and there you will hear all without the chance of discovery."

"What does this mean?" I cried. "What horrid secret am I to listen to? Let me go — let me go!"

"It is too late," said Rebecca, turning suddenly away and listening earnestly; "there is my father's ring at the door — hide, hide quickly! for my sake, Alice — for my sake!" — and she half led, half dragged me into the recess.

Herr Stolberg came and stood beside me, and Rebecca drew the heavy folds, so that they fell from ceiling to floor, and shrouded us from sight.

"Stay there; move not, breathe not," she said

as she turned to go. "God help you, my poor Alice!"

The kiss she gave me covered my lips and cheek with tears. Rebecca weeping, and for me! I pressed my hands rigidly upon my breast, and waited, as if for death. My companion spoke no word, and for some minutes I heard only his breathing. Then came a sound as of the opening and shutting of distant doors; a tread of feet along the hall; and the accents of a low querulous voice, as some persons entered the room in which we were concealed.

"More money! more money! always money!" said the voice, with an impatient sigh. There was a rustling of papers on the table, and a sound like turning the leaves of a book. "I cannot do it, excellency — I cannot do it. The estates will not bear another groschen. They are mortgaged to their full value, excellency. It cannot be."

"*Der Teufel!* I must have it, Leo," said another voice in reply.

Oh! that voice, that voice! Had I come hither for this! I shrunk back, and felt the paternal arm of my friend clasped round me in support.

"You must go to some one else, excellency, for your money," said the Jew. "I am a poor man, and I cannot *give*."

"Give! Did a Jew ever give?" said the other. "No, friend Leo, I ask no gifts — the gentleman does not beg from the money-lender. I must have further loans. I want a thousand florins."

Oh, the harsh, cold, mocking voice! How unlike

the gentle tones I had been used to hear from those dear lips!

"A thousand florins, excellency!" cried the usurer. "Mein Gott! your estates are not worth a thousand kreutzers."

"I don't ask it on my estates; I offer better security."

"Security! good — good!" said the Jew, eagerly. "What security, excellency?"

"Listen, my very kind and respectable friend Isaac, and I will satisfy the delicate scruples of thy coffers, for conscience thou hast none. I am going to be married in the spring."

"I know it — I know it, and to a penniless singer, excellency."

"Precisely so, friend Isaac. To a penniless singer, who will be to me one of the greatest fortunes in Germany."

"Hein!" exclaimed the Jew, drawing a long breath between his teeth.

"Art thou aware, my friend, that this girl has the finest voice in Germany? — that she will create a madness, a *furor?* — that she will be worth, at the very least, a hundred thousand florins a year to *me*, her husband, and your debtor."

"And is this your security, excellency?"

"Truly it is. Can you wish a better."

"Bah! it is a folly. The girl may fail — may change her mind — may refuse you. I cannot lend my florins upon this phantom of a security."

"But I tell you she loves me, as only women love, friend Isaac. She would die for me. She is

entirely mine. Your money is as safe as though it were in your own strong-boxes. Name your own rate of interest, and take my bond at once. Money I must and will have. Without it, I cannot even marry suitably. Surely the stake is worth the risk? Come, Isaac — a thousand florins at two hundred per cent., payable in six months! Can you refuse?"

"A thousand florins! It is a great deal, excellency."

"I have not ten left to keep me from now till then. The cards and colours have been against me lately. It is fate. *Die Hölle*, Isaac, you must give it to me!"

"But you will be here again, excellency, before the week is past. The gaming-table will swallow every groschen. I dare not lend."

The answer was low and indistinct; the Jew seemed still to remonstrate, Theodore to asseverate and entreat. Then there was a rustling of more papers, the quick scratching of a pen, the ring of gold . . .

"Friend Isaac, thou art a treasure of a money-lender," said the mocking voice. "A very demigod to a lover in distress. Cupid himself smiles on thee for this."

"You a lover, excellency!" said the Jew, with a short hard cough. "The lady of *your* affections must have charms indeed! I have heard of her from one who knows her, else I should hardly have trusted your story. She is pretty, I am told."

"I do not come here to talk of beauty and fair dames, friend Isaac," laughed the creditor, chinking

some coins in his hand. "She is young, credulous, and clever — that is enough for our purpose. Pretty! — know'st thou the complexion of my mistress, Isaac?"

"Not I, excellency."

"Red and black, friend Jew — *rouge et noir!* Good night! ha, ha! good night."

Their steps died away along the passage; doors shut and opened again; the room was left in darkness; and all was still. I did not weep; I did not speak; I did not die. My hands were locked and cold; my lips were stony; my brain burned. I stood still — still and speechless. The world seemed crumbling away beneath my feet. Life — death — love! what were they all but words? I felt my hands grasped, and my brow kissed twice or thrice; I heard a faltering voice cry: —

"Alice, Alice, my friend, my sister, look up — speak — weep! Do not look thus — it terrifies me!"

I heard it; but it fell dully on my ear, and woke no echo in my soul. Then there came a light; a withdrawal of the curtains; a woman's gentle voice, that sobbed forth sweet, consoling words; a woman's gentle hands, that drew me to a sisterly embrace.

Then the deadly frost all suddenly gave way; I uttered a low moan, and fell in an agony of despair upon the floor.

How long I continued thus, or how I was removed, I know not; but I suppose I must have fainted, for my next recollection is of a room in the academy, with Madame Kloss and Rebecca bathing my hands and brow, and Herr Stolberg bending

earnestly above me. For some time I could not recall the dreadful past, but when I did, that memory was mercifully accompanied by tears. They were so good to me — so gentle! For hours and hours they never left my side, and it was nearly day-dawn before they thought me calm enough to be left alone. I felt as if all were night — past, present, future. Nothing around me, nothing before me but darkness; darkness unlighted by a single star.

And through all this there reigned one feverish desire which gained every moment in intensity — a restless longing to be far, far away — oh, not from my misery! but from the place where its cross was laid upon me. Away from the scenes of my youth and my false happiness! What was that youth now to me? — what that brief sunshine? What was left me but to die?

I was sitting, fixed and tearless, as these thoughts formed themselves in my mind. My eyes fell upon the letter of the French manager. My resolution was taken in an instant.

"I will go," said I firmly.

I took pen and paper, and wrote to Herr Stolberg, acquainting him with my resolution; sent for Madame Kloss, and told her what I had done; and wrote a formal resignation of my appointment in the ducal chapel.

"When wilt thou go, my child?" asked Madame Kloss, tenderly.

"To-night, madame, when the diligence passes through the town."

VII.

Alone, alone upon the road! Night and darkness around. No moon, no stars. Rain — driving, pitiless rain, streaming down the narrow windows of the coach, and dimming the pale light of the lamps outside. Not a sound save the wintry wind among the woods, the hoarse shouts of the postilions, the heavy wheels, and the monotonous trampling of the horses.

There was no passenger inside the diligence but myself; no friendly voice to breathe one comforting word to the weeping, desolate singer crouched in the corner. Herr Stolberg had seen me to the coach-office, and had ridden perhaps a mile with me on the road. But he had scarcely spoken to me all the time, and as he bade me farewell, and got out to walk back again in the dark, wet night, his voice was broken; and my hands, where he had kissed them, were wetted with his tears. True friend! — true, noble, and sincere! That voice might be harsh, but it was capable of framing tones of gentlest consolation; that eye might be stern, but it could weep for pity. When I needed him not, he had been proud and cold to me; in the day of danger, he had rescued me; in the time of trouble, he had aided and comforted me.

It was a weary journey! I remember little of it, save a long succession of stages; the changes of day and night; the arrival and departure of many pas-

sengers; the toilsome motion; the heavy weight of unconquerable distress.

At last came the passing of frontiers, the transition from German to Dutch, from Dutch to French. Then a difference in the aspect of the country — towns, villages, rivers, hills, and forests; then a city with long narrow streets, and high white houses; custom-house-officers, the examination of passports and luggage. I was in Paris.

The hotel was immense, and my rooms overlooked a handsome street, thronged with vehicles, soldiers, and gaily-dressed foot-passengers. I was alone with my grief in the great city. The language was unfamiliar though not unknown to me; and my heart yearned again for the studious seclusion of my old home in Germany, and the sonorous sounds of my adopted tongue.

The manager of the Opera House, M. Lecroix, waited upon me the day after my arrival.

He was a Frenchman, but had been educated in Munich with his friend the chapel-master of Schwartzenfelden. He spoke German fluently. It was so pleasant to me to hear him utter it! He was grave, polite, even friendly. He did not remain long, for he could see that I was suffering; and, attributing my pallor to the fatigue of my long journey, withdrew very shortly, having first arranged that I should attend the next day's rehearsal.

It went off favourably. The novelty and excitement of the scene revived my spirits for the while. I returned to my hotel, and applied myself to the study of my part. Thus a fortnight passed. We

had daily rehearsals; my time and my mind were occupied; my old ambition was aroused; the heavy weight still lay upon my heart, but its sting was not so sharp. I could think of Theodore now with pity, and with less despair. I grew daily paler and thinner; but by degrees I found that I entered more immediately into the events and scenes around me. The night of performance was at length announced, and my name appeared in the bills and daily journals as the new prima donna. The opera was *Gustavus*.

When the day came, I was strangely excited; not with grief, not with terror, but with a kind of wild delight that was half misery. I felt within myself a strong foreboding of success; I longed to win fame and riches, not for myself, ah, no! but that Theodore might hear of my triumph; might lament the heart he had lost; might blush for his own baseness! As the hour of performance neared, my emotion became almost uncontrollable. I seemed to tread upon air; my cheeks were flushed; my heart beat high; my pulse throbbed rapidly.

"Ah, mademoiselle, you will achieve a great success," said the manager, with a glance of delighted surprise as I entered the green-room to await my call. "You have the air of Jeanne d'Arc going forth to conquer."

I smiled at the compliment: I conversed with those around me. I was utterly unlike the silent singer who had passed through the rehearsals with such cold reserve and absent melancholy. I saw the others look from one to another with amazement,

and then back again to me. I caught a glimpse of my face in a mirror as I passed, and I scarcely recognized the glowing cheeks, the flashing eyes, the haughty carriage and triumphant lip for my own.

The first act passed away with moderate applause. Rubini, as *Gustavus*, was received cordially; but the audience remained quiet. The whole of this act is somewhat uninteresting. There was a pause; the second act commenced; and it was now my turn to appear as Amelia, the wife of the courtier Ankerström, who seeks the abode of the prophetess in order to purchase from her a philter which may annihilate her unhappy attachment for *Gustavus*.

"Mademoiselle is called," said M. Lecroix.

I went on. I had no sooner appeared in the far gloom of the apartment, than a burst of applause shook the very air around me. I made the customary reverence. It was repeated again and again, in three distinct rounds. I trembled, but I did not fear. The footlights blinded me. They seemed to interpose a curtain of light between the audience and myself. I could not see an inch beyond the stage. The stage! — it was the first time I had ever appeared there, yet I scarcely seemed to feel it strange. I breathed freely. I felt glad and strong; but I assumed the trembling tone and shrinking attitude of the high-born lady in the fortune-teller's hut. I implored her aid. My changing countenance depicted alternate terror, love, courage, despair. The prophetess declares that I must seek that dreadful spot beyond the city-walls where stands the scaffold, and there gather a certain mystic herb. I listen —

I waver — I consent. The crowd rushes in, and I fly from the scene.

There was another burst of applause; but the chorus instantly began, and my share in that act was concluded.

Another brief pause, and the curtain rose again. It was a strangely solemn scene, and marvellously painted: a desert heath near Stockholm. Two mossy columns, supporting a transverse bar of rusty iron, rise darkly in the midst of the stage. These answer the purpose of a gibbet, and the ghastly chains yet hang from them in which criminals are suspended.

I come slowly forward to seek, in that terrible solitude, the plant whose sovereign virtue is oblivion. The house is silent; and in the opening recitative, the first notes of my voice, imploring courage from Heaven, seem to wander tremblingly round the space, and then to die away in terror. I advance, recede, advance again, and stoop to pluck the magic leaves. The distant clocks tell the hour of midnight. I cannot pluck the herb — I love! Yet, great Heaven, guide and strengthen me. I *will* gather it. I turn again, and see the king!

Then follows that highly-wrought scene of doubt and passion — the struggle of honour, friendship, fidelity, and wildest love, on which the curtain falls!

Another long roar of approbation from the house. I am led forward; bouquets fall around me; the dazzling effect of the lights has worn away. I see a vast crowd of upturned faces, and many are in tears.

"Ah, Mademoiselle," says M. Lecroix, kissing my hand in a frenzy of delight, "I never knew so splendid a success!"

Then came a magnificent scene, representing the ball-room with its flowers, its myriads of variegated lamps, its vistas of gilded columns, and its crowds of dancers with their joyous voices, their rich costumes, and black velvet masks. All was confusion, splendour, intoxication. I advanced from one side; *Gustavus* from the other.

But the king was closely followed by a figure in a black domino. My eyes were suddenly rivetted on this man. He held his plumed hat in his hand, and his light curling hair contrasted strikingly with that sable vizor. A strange feeling came over me; my heart stood still; my breath failed me.

It was now my part to address *Gustavus*. The promptor gave the word; the stage waited for me; I compelled myself to advance. The stranger stepped suddenly to my side, and removed his mask.

"Alice!" he said, "I love you! — I cannot live without you! Were it to the ends of the earth; I must follow you!"

Oh! Heaven, that voice! — that voice again! I saw his pallid face, and wild bright eyes! The crowded stage, the glaring lights, the throng of faces in the theatre — all swam round before me. I uttered one piercing cry, and fell senseless to the ground.

VIII.

For many days after this event, my life remains a blank. The destruction of all my hopes, the rapid journey, the false excitement, and the shock I had received upon the stage, had been too much for my physical and mental strength. I was stricken down with fever and delirium.

After an interval that seemed to me as many months long as it was days, I woke one morning, as if from sleep. At first I had no recollection of what had passed. I fancied myself once more in Germany. I tried to rise; but found myself without the power to move!

I was alarmed. I looked round. The room was strange to me, and yet I had seen it before. A fire burned in the grate, and the blinds were drawn carefully down. I saw I had been ill. I closed my eyes; and suddenly it all came again before me — the theatre — the opera — the masked man with the golden hair! Silent tears stole gently down my cheeks as I lay thinking.

By-and-by the door opened gently, and a woman entered. Her face was young and kind, and I tried to force a smile.

"I am better," I said in French. "Are you my nurse?"

"Ah! thank Heaven!" she cried, "madame is recovering! *Mais il ne faut pas parler!*" she continued earnestly, as she saw me about to speak. "It is forbidden by monsieur the doctor."

"At least tell me how long I have been ill," I said.

"Madame has been three weeks in danger. If madame will rest tranquil till monsieur the doctor has seen her, I will then talk to her as much as she pleases."

With this assurance I was forced to be content. Pierrette, for that was the name of my attendant, bathed my hands and face with tender care, and then sat knitting quietly beside me. At last I fell asleep again, lulled by the monotonous motion of her busy fingers. I woke upon the entrance of the physician. He spoke softly; said that I was out of danger; and, promising to call upon the morrow, left me.

It was now evening. Pierrette lighted a small lamp; drew the curtain before my eyes; recommenced her knitting, and began: —

"And now, if madame will promise not to speak or to excite herself, I will tell her all about her illness."

I promised; and she continued.

"*Eh bien!* Madame was taken ill upon the stage, after making a success altogether enormous. Madame fell, nobody knows why; and shrieked, nobody knows wherefore. She was ill — under the influence of fever — *voilà tout!* She was brought hither in a carriage, and placed in bed. Madame was delirious — her ravings were terrible. This lasted three weeks, and madame's life was nearly despaired of. To-day, madame is saved, and her friend is happy!"

"Friend! — what friend?" I asked with eagerness.

"Silence, madame — not a word! Madame's friend, the gentleman who has called three or four times every day to inquire after her health. Ah, the poor monsieur! he tried, while madame was in danger, to seem firm and strong; but to-day, when he heard the happy news, he wept as if his heart would break for joy!"

I was dumb with surprise and happiness. Did he then truly love me, after all? Pierrette saw the expression of silent thankfulness upon my face.

"Ah! madame," she said archly, "my little history will do more good than the medicines of monsieur the doctor. But it is not all. Madame will not blame me very much if I acknowledge that I have once suffered the gentleman to see madame during her illness? This poor monsieur, he prayed me so wildly for one glance at the face which we all believed he might never see again! And so I brought him to the threshold of madame's chamber, and entreated him to go no further; but he was not then to be controlled. He rushed forward and knelt beside the bed, and kissed her burning hands, and sobbed — ah! *c'était affreux!* But madame must not weep: I will say no more if madame excites herself!"

Could I help weeping? Ah! blessed tears, how sweet and joyful were they! Theodore, my own Theodore! I had wronged him: he might be extravagant, thoughtless; but false . . . Thank Heaven!

that grief was spared me, and I felt that all the rest was forgiven.

That night I slept long and dreamlessly. It was the sleep of health; and the next morning I felt much stronger. Days passed pleasantly away. Pierrette was attentive and affectionate. She told me of the visits of "that poor monsieur;" and constantly brought me flowers and books, which he left for me at the porter's lodge. It was winter-time; yet violets and exquisite camellias were laid every morning and evening upon my dressing-table.

I recovered very slowly, and three weeks elapsed before I could leave my bedroom. One day, Pierrette came all smiles and mystery.

"There has been another gentleman this morning inquiring at the gate for news of madame. He trusts that madame will receive him *le plus tôt que possible!*"

"Can you describe this gentleman?" I asked.

"*Eh bien!* I did not see him; but Auguste told me that he was a fair, pale gentleman."

M. Lecroix was pale and fair; it was doubtless he.

"I shall be well enough to-morrow, Pierrette," was my reply. "Leave word with the concierge, that I shall be happy to receive the gentleman at two o'clock in the day."

So it was the manager, wishing me, of course, to resume my engagement. I was sorry to be the cause of so much confusion and loss, and I was eager to begin work as soon as possible.

I could not resist the impulse that came upon

me to try my voice once more. I sat down to the piano, and played the opening symphony of a little German song that *he* had often loved to listen to. I tried to sing. Was it weakness? Was it emotion? Not a note came! Again I tried — again — again!

Alas! it must be so! My voice, my glorious, my beautiful voice was utterly, utterly gone! My head dropped upon my hands, and I sobbed aloud.

It was a great sorrow; but I still had Theodore. That night I prayed for strength and comfort, and felt that what I had lost was more than compensated to me in his love.

"I have been deprived of it but a little sooner," I argued with myself. "Age must have brought this calamity, though more slowly. It is but a few years less — a feverish dream of fame from which I have awakened ere it reached the end. God is just and wise — His will be done!"

In the morning I felt calm; almost cheerful.

"Auguste tells me, madame," said Pierrette, "that the fair gentleman has called again, and when he heard your message, said that he should kiss your hands punctually at the time appointed."

"And the other gentleman?" I asked, for there had been no bouquet for the last two mornings.

"The other monsieur has not called, madame, for two days. When he came last, Auguste told him that madame was greatly better, and would soon receive; but monsieur only sighed, and turned away hastily. He has not called since."

"And he has never left either card or message?"

"Never, madame."

This delicacy touched me more nearly than all his devotion. Poor Theodore! he feared to intrude his love, or even his repentance, upon me!

Two o'clock came.

I almost dreaded the visit of M. Lecroix. I shrunk from telling him that my career was closed; that I had no voice to sing for him!

Pierrette came hastily in: —

"He is here, madame — the fair monsieur who called yesterday! I see him in the courtyard."

I rose to receive him. Pierrette opened the door of the ante-chamber, and admitted — THEODORE!

He flew to me — he covered my hands with kisses — he knelt to me — he clasped me in his arms — he breathed his passionate protestations on my lips!

For some time I was dumb. Surprise and disappointment overwhelmed me. Not disappointment at the sight of that still beloved face; but bitter disappointment that his had not been the anxiety, the haunting visits, the eager inquiries, the tears shed at my bed-side when I was near to die! Who, then, had been that one whose life seemed to hang upon mine?

"Alas!" I said bitterly, "then it was not thou!"

He asked my meaning, and I told him all. He had for some moments no reply to give. At last he stammered a few vague excuses. He also had been ill — his fortunes were embarrassed, and he had

been occupied in law matters — he had repeatedly inquired for me; but, doubtless, the porter had omitted to name his visits.

I looked steadily at him. In that look the truth became plain to my eyes, and the love passed away from my heart. I doubted him; and mistrust cannot dwell with love. I resolved to put his protestations to the proof.

"And do you still love me, Theodore?" I said.

"Heaven is my witness," he exclaimed, "that you are dearer to me at this moment than you ever were before!"

"And you love me for myself and my heart only?"

"For thyself, for thy gentleness, for thy woman's heart!"

"And if I were poor — poor of my only advantages? If I had even no voice to recommend me — no voice wherewith to earn riches for my husband?"

"Then wouldst thou be dearer still, my own love! Dearer in thy privation — dearer if dependent solely on my arm."

"It is well, Theodore," I said very calmly, fixing the same unwavering glance upon him; "for such indeed is my condition. The fever has dealt hardly with me. I have lost my voice!"

He was once more kneeling at my feet; but when I said these words, he rose, and turned deadly pale. He could not believe me. He looked at me;

yet I seemed grave, and in earnest. He tried to force a smile.

"You are jesting with me, my love!"

"Indeed, no," I replied; "my voice is irrevocably gone. I shall never sing again."

He dropped into a chair. The very power of dissimulation seemed to leave him. His cheeks and lips became livid. I could almost have pitied his dismay, but for the scorn with which his baseness inspired me.

"I fear," said I, haughtily, "that your excellency is disappointed."

He started, rose, pressed his hand to his forehead, pleaded a sudden illness, and begged permission to retire. He advanced as if to embrace me. I drew back with undisguised contempt; but he seized my hand, touched it with his lips — and they were icy cold — bowed profoundly, and hastened from the room.

Traitor that he was! I felt too much indignation to be moved either by grief or compassion. My pride was wounded, but my heart untouched. I sat down and wrote instantly to M. Lecroix. My letter was brief and decisive. I told him all — how my voice was gone, and my theatrical career consequently ended. I expressed my regret for his disappointment, and announced my intention of speedily quitting Paris.

I rang for Pierrette, despatched my letter to the manager, and then, turning to her — "Pierrette," I said, "I wish to go into the country for a few months. Will you accompany me?"

"To the country, madame? At this time of the year? Ah, the country in February is so *triste!*"

"Not to me. I have been used to love it at all seasons. Will you go with me, Pierrette?"

"I will go with you, *ma chère dame* — with you anywhere!"

So I consulted her about the locality, and she named many in the neighbourhood of Paris — Ville d'Avray, Asnières, Argenteuil, St. Germain; but it ended in my leaving the choice to herself. I then arranged that she should go out the next day and seek some retreat for me.

Evening came. I sat beside the fire, and formed a plan for my future life. I resolved to spend some months in the country till my health was thoroughly restored, and then to seek the situation of governess in some French or English family.

"A letter for madame," said Pierrette, entering and disturbing my reverie.

I recognised Theodore's well-known hand; but the time when my heart used to beat at the sight of it, was now gone by for ever. I wondered if it would be like his former letters; but no — this epistle was couched in a different strain. He regretted my loss and his own poverty: he had no desire to drag me down to want; he felt that the most generous part would be to resign me. I was free — he was for ever unhappy. He wished me all forgetfulness of my devoted servant, Theodore von Bachhofen.

Generous indeed!

And so this was the end — the end of that golden dream of truth and love! One tear fell on the paper: it was the last lingering weakness of my heart. I crushed the letter, and cast it into the flames. It blazed and writhed, turned to a black film lighter than the very air, and fell away in dust. I looked up, and saw Pierrette still standing there. There was a curious meaning in her face.

"You are waiting to say something to me?" I asked.

"No — yes; that is — I have heard of a residence for madame."

"Indeed!" I said. "Where is it, Pierrette?"

"At Bellevue, madame, near Sèvres. I have a cousin there who owns a house in a charming situation — and — and it is at madame's service for as many months as she may please to reside there."

"This is indeed delightful, Pierrette," I said, smiling. "When may we go there?"

"To-morrow, if madame pleases; or the next day."

So I named the next day, thinking I should then be stronger for the journey. During the time that intervened, Pierrette was in a state of uncontrollable excitement. She laughed, danced, chattered, and was beside herself with joy. She seemed frequently on the point of saying something, and as often checked herself. When I questioned her, she parried my inquiries by saying that she had prepared a little surprise for me at Bellevue — but she would not tell — no, not for the world!

The morning came at length. I had thought much of this "poor monsieur" of whom Pierrette had told me; but since I had received that letter from the baron, she remained unaccountably silent about him. Before we left the hotel, I gave her a card with my address at Bellevue written upon it, and desired her to leave it with the concierge in case he should call; for I had a haunting desire to see and know this man. "And so he never came again, Pierrette?" I said as I gave it to her.

"Oh! no, madame — no."

"Can you not describe his appearance, his complexion, his height?"

"I, madame? *Ah ciel!* not I! I do not observe gentlemen."

So it was of no avail; and as we drove away, I sighed to think that I might never know him.

I was still weak, and the sight of the crowded streets, the glittering shops, the thronging vehicles, distressed and fluttered me. I leaned back in the corner, and closed my eyes. When I again opened them, we were passing along a country road bordered by barren fields and leafless trees. The air was fresh and clear, and there was a look of awakening spring in everything around. I felt a great peace and resignation steal upon me; and, though I was very silent, I felt less unhappy. We passed many pretty country-houses, and a thick wood, green with wintry firs. We then entered a lane arched in with trees — a lane that must have been a perfect bower in the summer season. The coach stopped sud-

denly before an exquisite little country-house, all overgrown with dark glossy ivy, and fenced in by gigantic shrubs. Here we alighted. Pierrette gave me her arm, and led me through the house — all was new, tasteful, and complete.

"Is madame content?" asked Pierrette smiling.

Content! It was but too charming; and the rent I feared .... But Pierrette laughed and shook her head.

"Would not madame now wish to walk through the garden?"

So we went out by the windows of the salon, and down a flight of stone steps to the grassy lawn. Even at this season, the place looked beautiful. The tiny crosuses and snowdrops were just blossoming above the mould; the laurel, the fir, the laurustina with its pink clustering blossoms, and the thick ivy, lent a green like spring-time. There was a summer-house at the end, with a tiny fountain in front.

"Madame must rest in the summer-house for a few moments," said Pierrette, as she made me take a seat.

What was there in so simple a thing as a bouquet of camellias to make me start and tremble as I did, to see it lying there upon the little rustic table?

I rose, half terrified, as if to go — there was a footstep on the gravel-walk — Pierrette clapped her hands, and ran away.

"Pierrette! Pierrette!" I cried, and was about to follow, when a tall form interposed, and a gentle

hand took mine. I did not look upon his face; but my heart told me who it was. Blind as I had been before, I knew all now!

"Alice! Alice!" said Herr Stolberg as he led me back to the arbour and stood before me — "I love you!"

I made no reply, and he went on.

"Alice! I have loved you for the last ten years — ever since you were a little child. When you were a child, I was a man; I have now reached middle life, and you are in the bloom of youth. Can you love me?"

I was silent, but the tears slowly filled my eyes and dropped upon my cheeks.

"I have never left you, Alice," he said in the same low tone, "since that night when you departed in sorrow from your German home. On the roof of the same coach, I travelled with, and protected you. In Paris, I have watched over you; and when death threatened to remove you from my care, I was ready also to die!"

I looked up into his dark eyes, and, standing there in his noble truth and generous love, to me he seemed almost beautiful.

"I have prepared this summer-home for you. Be my wife, Alice, and let us share it together! When the autumn comes, we will go back to Germany, and to our art."

I smiled sadly through my tears.

"But I have no voice," I said softly.

denly before an exquisite little country-house, all overgrown with dark glossy ivy, and fenced in by gigantic shrubs. Here we alighted. Pierrette gave me her arm, and led me through the house — all was new, tasteful, and complete.

"Is madame content?" asked Pierrette smiling.

Content! It was but too charming; and the rent I feared .... But Pierrette laughed and shook her head.

"Would not madame now wish to walk through the garden?"

So we went out by the windows of the salon, and down a flight of stone steps to the grassy lawn. Even at this season, the place looked beautiful. The tiny crosuses and snowdrops were just blossoming above the mould; the laurel, the fir, the laurustina with its pink clustering blossoms, and the thick ivy, lent a green like spring-time. There was a summer-house at the end, with a tiny fountain in front.

"Madame must rest in the summer-house for a few moments," said Pierrette, as she made me take a seat.

What was there in so simple a thing as a bouquet of camellias to make me start and tremble as I did, to see it lying there upon the little rustic table?

I rose, half terrified, as if to go — there was a footstep on the gravel-walk — Pierrette clapped her hands, and ran away.

"Pierrette! Pierrette!" I cried, and was about to follow, when a tall form interposed, and a gentle

me to try my voice once more. I sat down to the piano, and played the opening symphony of a little German song that *he* had often loved to listen to. I tried to sing. Was it weakness? Was it emotion? Not a note came! Again I tried — again — again!

Alas! it must be so! My voice, my glorious, my beautiful voice was utterly, utterly gone! My head dropped upon my hands, and I sobbed aloud.

It was a great sorrow; but I still had Theodore. That night I prayed for strength and comfort, and felt that what I had lost was more than compensated to me in his love.

"I have been deprived of it but a little sooner," I argued with myself. "Age must have brought this calamity, though more slowly. It is but a few years less — a feverish dream of fame from which I have awakened ere it reached the end. God is just and wise — His will be done!"

In the morning I felt calm; almost cheerful.

"Auguste tells me, madame," said Pierrette, "that the fair gentleman has called again, and when he heard your message, said that he should kiss your hands punctually at the time appointed."

"And the other gentleman?" I asked, for there had been no bouquet for the last two mornings.

"The other monsieur has not called, madame, for two days. When he came last, Auguste told him that madame was greatly better, and would soon receive; but monsieur only sighed, and turned away hastily. He has not called since."

"I know it; still thou hast voice enough to say: 'I love thee' — and that is all the melody my heart asks from thine."

And so, reader, I said it.

The words were spoken fifteen years ago, and I have not repented of them yet.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NORTH MAIL.

circumstances I am about to relate to you
th to recommend them. They happened to
and my recollection of them is as vivid as if
taken place only yesterday. Twenty years,
, have gone by since that night. During
enty years I have told the story to but one
rson. I tell it now with a reluctance which
difficult to overcome. All I entreat, mean-
s that you will abstain from forcing your
clusions upon me. I want nothing explained
I desire no arguments. My mind on this
s quite made up; and, having the testimony
wn senses to rely upon, I prefer to abide

! It was just twenty years ago, and within
two of the end of the grouse season. I had
all day with my gun, and had had no sport
of. The wind was due east; the month,
r; the place, a bleak wide moor in the far
England. And I had lost my way. It was
asant place in which to lose one's way, with
feathery flakes of a coming snow-storm just
down upon the heather, and the leaden
closing in all around. I shaded my eyes

with my hand, and stared anxiously into the gathering darkness, where the purple moorland melted into a range of low hills, some ten or twelve miles distant. Not the faintest smoke-wreath, not the tiniest cultivated patch, or fence, or sheep-track, met my eyes in any direction. There was nothing for it but to walk on, and take my chance of finding what shelter I could, by the way. So I shouldered my gun again, and pushed wearily forward; for I had been on foot since an hour after daybreak, and had eaten nothing since breakfast.

Meanwhile, the snow began to come down with ominous steadiness, and the wind fell. After this, the cold grew more intense, and the night came rapidly up. As for me, my prospects darkened with the darkening sky, and my heart sank as I thought how my young wife was already watching for me through the window of our little inn parlour, and imagined all the suffering in store for her throughout this weary night. We had been married four months, and, having spent our autumn in the Highlands, were now lodging in a remote little village situated just on the verge of the great English moorlands. We were very much in love, and, of course, very happy. This morning, when we parted, she had implored me to return before dusk, and I had promised her that I would. What would I not have given to keep my word!

Even now, weary as I was, I felt that with a supper, an hour's rest, and a guide, I might still get back to her before midnight, if only guide and shelter could be found.

And all this time the snow fell, and the night thickened. I stopped and shouted every now and then, but my shouts seemed only to make the silence deeper. Then a vague sense of uneasiness came upon me, and I began to remember stories of travellers who had walked on and on in the falling snow until, wearied out, they were fain to lie down and sleep their lives away. Would it be possible, I asked myself, to keep on thus through all the long dark night? Would there not come a time when my limbs must fail, and my resolution give way? When I, too, must sleep the sleep of death. Death! I shuddered. How hard to die just now, when life lay all so bright before me! How hard for my darling, whose whole loving heart .... but that thought was not to be borne! To banish it, I shouted again, louder and longer, and then listened eagerly. Was my shout answered, or did I only fancy that I heard a far-off cry? I halloed again, and again the echo followed. Then a wavering speck of light came suddenly out of the dark, shifting, disappearing, growing momentarily nearer and brighter. Running towards it at full speed, I found myself, to my great joy, face to face with an old man and a lantern.

"Thank God!" was the exclamation that burst involuntarily from my lips.

Blinking and frowning, he lifted the lantern and peered into my face.

"What for?" growled he, sulkily.

"Well — for you. I began to fear I should be lost in the snow."

"Eh, then, folks do get cast away hereabouts fra' time to time, an' what's to hinder you from bein' cast away likewise, if the Lord's so minded?"

"If the Lord is so minded that you and I shall be lost together, friend, we must submit," I replied; "but I don't mean to be lost without you. How far am I now from Dwolding?"

"A gude twenty mile, more or less."

"And the nearest village?"

"The nearest village is Wyke, an' that's twelve mile t'other side."

"Where do you live, then?"

"Out yonder," said he, with a vague jerk of the lantern.

"You're going home, I presume?"

"Maybe I am."

"Then I'm going with you."

The old man shook his head, and rubbed his nose reflectively with the handle of the lantern.

"It ain't o' no use," growled he. "He 'ont let you in — not he."

"We'll see about that," I replied, briskly. "Who is He?"

"The master."

"Who is the master?"

"That's now't to you," was the unceremonious reply.

"Well, well; you lead the way, and I'll engage that the master shall give me shelter and a supper to-night."

"Eh, you can try him!" muttered my reluctant

guide; and, still shaking his head, he hobbled, gnome-like, away through the falling snow.

A large mass loomed up presently out of the darkness, and a huge dog rushed out barking furiously.

"Is this the house?" I asked.

"Ay, it's the house. Down, Bey!" And he fumbled in his pocket for the key.

I drew up close behind him, prepared to lose no chance of entrance, and saw in the little circle of light shed by the lantern that the door was heavily studded with iron nails, like the door of a prison. In another minute he had turned the key, and I had pushed past him into the house.

Once inside, I looked round with curiosity, and found myself in a great raftered hall, which served, apparently, a variety of uses. One end was piled to the roof with corn, like a barn. The other was stored with floursacks, agricultural implements, casks, and all kinds of miscellaneous lumber; while from the beams overhead hung rows of hams, flitches, and bunches of dried herbs for winter use. In the centre of the floor stood some huge object gauntly dressed in a dingy wrapping-cloth, and reaching halfway to the rafters. Lifting a corner of this cloth, I saw, to my surprise, a telescope of very considerable size, mounted on a rude moveable platform with four small wheels. The tube was made of painted wood, bound round with bands of metal rudely fashioned; the speculum, so far as I could estimate its size by the dim light, measured at least fifteen inches in diameter. While I was yet examining the instru-

ment, and asking myself whether it was not the work of some self-taught optician, a bell rang sharply.

"That's for you," said my guide, with a malicious grin. "Yonder's his room."

He pointed to a low black door at the opposite side of the hall. I crossed over, rapped somewhat loudly, and went in, without waiting for an invitation. A huge, white-haired old man rose from a table covered with books and papers, and confronted me sternly.

"Who are you?" said he. "How came you here? What do you want?"

"James Murray, barrister-at-law. On foot across the moor. Meat, drink, and sleep."

He bent his bushy brows in a portentous frown.

"Mine is not a house of entertainment," he said, haughtily. "Jacob, how dared you admit this stranger?"

"I didn't admit him," grumbled the old man. "He followed me over the muir, and shouldered his way in before me. I'm no match for six foot two."

"And pray, sir, by what right have you forced an entrance into my house?"

"The same by which I should have clung to your boat, if I were drowning. The right of self-preservation?"

"Self-preservation?"

"There's an inch of snow on the ground already," I replied briefly; "and it will be deep enough to cover my body before day-break."

He strode to the window, pulled aside a heavy black curtain, and looked out.

"It is true," he said. "You can stay, if you choose, till morning. Jacob, serve the supper."

With this he waved me to a seat, resumed his own, and became at once absorbed in the studies at which I had disturbed him.

I placed my gun in a corner, drew a chair to the hearth, and examined my quarters at leisure. Smaller and less incongruous in its arrangements than the hall, this room contained, nevertheless, much to awaken my curiosity. The floor was carpetless. The whitewashed walls were in parts scrawled over with strange diagrams, and in others covered with shelves crowded with philosophical instruments, the uses of many of which were unknown to me. On one side of the fireplace stood a bookcase filled with dingy folios; on the other, a small organ, fantastically decorated with painted carvings of mediæval saints and devils. Through the half-opened door of a cupboard at the further end of the room, I saw a long array of geological specimens, surgical preparations, crucibles, retorts, and jars of chemicals; while on the mantelshelf beside me, amid a number of small objects, stood a model of the solar system, a small galvanic battery, and a microscope. Every chair had its burden. Every corner was heaped high with books. The very floor was littered over with maps, casts, papers, tracings, and learned lumber of all conceivable kinds.

I stared about me with an amazement increased by every fresh object upon which my eyes chanced to rest. So strange a room I had never seen; yet seemed it stranger still to find such a room in a lone

farmhouse, amid these wild and solitary moors! Over and over again, I looked from my host to his surroundings, and from his surroundings back to my host, asking myself who and what he could be? His head was singularly fine; but it was more the head of a poet than a philosopher. Broad in the temples, prominent over the eyes, and clothed with a rough profusion of perfectly white hair, it had all the ideality and much of the ruggedness that characterises the head of Louis van Beethoven. There were the same deep lines about the mouth, and the same stern furrows in the brow. There was the same concentration of expression. While I was yet observing him, the door opened, and Jacob brought in the supper. His master then closed his book, rose, and with more courtesy of manner than he had yet shown, invited me to the table.

A dish of ham and eggs, a loaf of brown bread, and a bottle of admirable sherry, were placed before me.

"I have but the homeliest farmhouse fare to offer you, sir," said my entertainer. "Your appetite, I trust, will make up for the deficiencies of our larder."

I had already fallen upon the viands, and now protested, with the enthusiasm of a starving sportsman, that I had never eaten anything so delicious.

He bowed stiffly, and sat down to his own supper, which consisted, primitively, of a jug of milk and a basin of porridge. We ate in silence, and, when we had done, Jacob removed the tray. I then drew my chair back to the fireside. My host, somewhat to

my surprise, did the same, and turning abruptly towards me said: —

"Sir, I have lived here in strict retirement for three-and-twenty years. During that time, I have not seen as many strange faces, and I have not read a single newspaper. You are the first stranger who has crossed my threshold for more than four years. Will you favour me with a few words of information respecting that outer world from which I have parted company so long?"

"Pray interrogate me," I replied. "I am heartily at your service."

He bent his head in acknowledgment; leaned forward, with his elbows resting on his knees, and his chin supported in the palms of his hands; stared fixedly into the fire, and proceeded to question me.

His inquiries related chiefly to scientific matters, with the later progress of which, as applied to the practical purposes of life, he was almost wholly unacquainted. No student of science myself, I replied as well as my slight information permitted; but the task was far from easy, and I was much relieved when, passing from interrogation to discussion, he began pouring forth his own conclusions upon the facts which I had been attempting to place before him. He talked, and I listened spell-bound. He talked till I believe he almost forgot my presence, and only thought aloud. I had never heard anything like it then; I have never heard anything like it since. Familiar with all systems of all philosophies, subtle in analysis, bold in generalisation, he poured forth his thoughts in an uninterrupted stream,

and, still leaning forward in the same moody attitude with his eyes fixed upon the fire, wandered from topic to topic, from speculation to speculation, like an inspired dreamer. From practical science to mental philosophy; from electricity in the wire to electricity in the nerve; from Watts to Mesmer, from Mesmer to Reichenbach, from Reichenbach to Swedenborg, Spinoza, Condillac, Descartes, Berkeley, Aristotle, Plato, and the Magi and Mystics of the East, were transitions which, however bewildering in their variety and scope, seemed easy and harmonious upon his lips as sequences in music. By-and-by — I forget now by what link of conjecture or illustration — he passed on to that field which lies beyond the boundary line of even conjectural philosophy, and reaches no man knows whither. He spoke of the soul and its aspirations; of the spirit and its powers; of second sight; of prophecy; of those phenomena which, under the names of ghosts, spectres, and supernatural appearances, have been denied by the sceptics and attested by the credulous, of all ages.

"The world," he said, "grows hourly more and more sceptical of all that lies beyond its own narrow radius; and our men of science foster the fatal tendency. They condemn as fable all that resists experiment. They reject as false all that cannot be brought to the test of the laboratory or the dissecting-room. Against what superstition have they waged so long and obstinate a war, as against the belief in apparitions? And yet what superstition has maintained its hold upon the minds of men so long and

so firmly? Show me any fact in physics, in history, in archæology, which is supported by testimony so wide and so various. Attested by all races of men, in all ages, and in all climates, by the soberest sages of antiquity, by the rudest savages of to-day, by the Christian, the Pagan, the Pantheist, the Materialist, this phenomenon is treated as a nursery tale by the philosophers of our century. Circumstantial evidence weighs with them as a feather in the balance. The comparison of causes with effects, however valuable in physical science, is put aside as worthless and unreliable. The evidence of competent witnesses, however conclusive in a court of justice, counts for nothing. He who pauses before he pronounces, is condemned as a trifler. He who believes, is a dreamer or a fool."

He spoke with bitterness, and, having said thus, relapsed for some minutes into silence. Presently he raised his head from his hands, and added, with an altered voice and manner —

"I, sir, paused, investigated, believed, and was not ashamed to state my convictions to the world. I, too, was branded as a visionary, held up to ridicule by my contemporaries, and hooted from that field of science in which I had laboured with honour during all the best years of my life. These things happened just three-and-twenty years ago. Since then, I have lived as you see me living now, and the world has forgotten me, as I have forgotten the world. You have my history."

"It is a very sad one," I murmured, scarcely knowing what to answer.

"It is a very common one," he replied. "I have only suffered for the truth, as many a better and wiser man has suffered before me."

He rose, as if desirous of ending the conversation, and went over to the window.

"It has ceased snowing," he observed, as he dropped the curtain, and came back to the fireside.

"Ceased!" I exclaimed, starting eagerly to my feet. "Oh, if it were only possible — but no! it is hopeless. Even if I could find my way across the moor, I could not walk twenty miles to-night."

"Walk twenty miles to-night!" repeated my host. "What are you thinking of?"

"Of my wife," I replied, impatiently. "Of my young wife, who does not know that I have lost my way, and who is at this moment breaking her heart with suspense and terror."

"Where is she?"

"At Dwolding, twenty miles away."

"At Dwolding," he echoed, thoughtfully. "Yes, the distance, it is true, is twenty miles; but — are you so anxious to save the next six or eight hours?"

"So anxious, that I would give ten guineas at this moment for a guide and a horse."

"Your wish can be gratified at a less costly rate," said he, smiling. "The night mail from the north, which changes horses at Dwolding, passes within five miles of this spot, and will be due at a certain cross-road in about an hour and a quarter. If Jacob were to go with you across the moor, and put you into the old coach road, you could find your way, I suppose, to where it joins the new one?"

"Easily — gladly."

He smiled again, rang the bell, gave the old servant his directions, and, taking a bottle of whisky and a wine-glass from the cupboard in which he kept his chemicals, said —

"The snow lies deep, and it will be difficult walking to-night on the moor. A glass of usquebaugh before you start."

I would have declined the spirit, but he pressed it on me, and I drank it. It went down my throat like liquid flame, and almost took my breath away.

"It is strong," he said; "but it will help to keep out the cold. And now you have no moments to spare. Good night!"

I thanked him for his hospitality, and would have shaken hands, but that he had turned away before I could finish my sentence. In another minute I had traversed the hall, Jacob had locked the outer door behind me, and we were out on the wide white moor.

Although the wind had fallen, it was still bitterly cold. Not a star glimmered in the black vault overhead. Not a sound, save the rapid crunching of the snow beneath our feet, disturbed the heavy stillness of the night. Jacob, not too well pleased with his mission, shambled on before in sullen silence, his lantern in his hand, and his shadow at his feet. I followed, with my gun over my shoulder, as little inclined for conversation as himself. My thoughts were full of my late host. His voice yet rang in my ears. His eloquence yet held my imagination captive. I remember to this day, with surprise, how

my overexcited brain retained whole sentences and parts of sentences, troops of brilliant images, and fragments of splendid reasoning, in the very words in which he had uttered them. Musing thus over what I had heard, and striving to recal a lost link here and there, I strode on at the heels of my guide, absorbed and unobservant. Presently — at the end, as it seemed to me, of only a few minutes — he came to a sudden halt, and said:

"Yon's your road. Keep the stone fence to your right hand, and you can't fail of the way."

"This, then, is the old coach-road?"

"Ay, 'tis the old coach-road."

"And how far do I go, before I reach the cross-roads?"

"Nigh upon three miles."

I pulled out my purse, and he became more communicative.

"The road's a fair road enough," said he, "for foot passengers; but 'twas over steep and narrow for the northern traffic. You'll mind where the parapet's broken away, close again the sign-post. It's never been mended since the accident."

"What accident?"

"Eh, the night mail pitched right over into the valley below — a gude sixty feet an' more — just at the worst bit o' road in the whole county."

"Horrible! Were many lives lost?"

"All. Four were found dead, and t'other two died next morning."

"How long is it since this happened?"

"Just nine year."

"Near the sign-post, you say? I will bear it in mind. Good night."

"Gude night, sir, and thankee."

Jacob pocketed his half-crown, made a faint pretence of touching his hat, and trudged back by the way he had come.

I watched the light of his lantern till it quite disappeared, and then turned to pursue my way alone. This was no longer a matter of the slightest difficulty, for, despite the dead darkness overhead, the line of stone fence showed distinctly enough against the pale gleam of the snow. How silent it seemed now, with only my own footsteps to listen to; how silent and how solitary! A strange disagreeable sense of loneliness stole over me. I walked faster. I hummed a fragment of a tune. I cast up enormous sums in my head, and accumulated them at compound interest. I did my best, in short, to forget the startling speculations to which I had but just been listening, and, to some extent, I succeeded.

Meanwhile the night air seemed to become colder and colder, and though I walked fast, I found it impossible to keep myself warm. My feet were like ice. I lost sensation in my hands, and grasped my gun mechanically. I even breathed with difficulty, as though, instead of traversing a quiet north country highway, I were scaling the uppermost heights of some gigantic Alp. This last symptom became presently so distressing, that I was forced to stop for a few minutes, and lean against the stone fence. As I did so, I chanced to look back up the road,

and there, to my infinite relief, I saw a distant point of light, like the gleam of an approaching lantern. I at first concluded that Jacob had retraced his steps and followed me; but even as the conjecture presented itself, a second light flashed into sight — a light evidently parallel with the first, and approaching at the same rate of motion. It needed no second thought to show me that these must be the carriage-lamps of some private vehicle; though it seemed strange that any private vehicle should take a road professedly disused and dangerous.

There could be no doubt, however, of the fact, for the lamps grew larger and brighter every moment, and I even fancied I could already see the dark outline of the carriage between them. It was coming up very fast, and quite noiselessly; the snow being nearly a foot deep under the wheels.

And now the body of the vehicle became distinctly visible behind the lamps. It looked strangely lofty. A sudden suspicion flashed upon me. Was it possible that I had passed the cross roads in the dark without observing the sign-post, and could this be the very coach which I had come to meet?

No need to ask myself that question a second time, for here it came round the bend of the road, guard and driver, one outside passenger, and four steaming greys, all wrapped in a soft haze of light, through which the lamps blazed out like a pair of fiery meteors.

I jumped forward, waved my hat, and shouted. The mail came down at full speed, and passed me. For a moment I feared that I had not been seen or

heard, but it was only for a moment. The coachman pulled up; the guard, muffled to the eyes in capes and comforters, and apparently sound asleep in the rumble, neither answered my hail nor made the slightest effort to dismount; the outside passenger did not even turn his head. I opened the door for myself, and looked in. There were but three travellers inside, so I stepped in, shut the door, slipped into the vacant corner, and congratulated myself on my good fortune.

The atmosphere of the coach seemed, if possible colder than that of the outer air, and was pervaded by a singularly damp and disagreeable smell. I looked round at my fellow passengers. They were all three men; and all silent. They did not seem to be asleep, but each leaned back in his corner of the vehicle, as if absorbed in his own reflections. I attempted to open a conversation.

"How intensely cold it is to-night," I said, addressing my opposite neighbour.

He lifted his head, looked at me, but made no reply.

"The winter," I added, "seems to have begun in earnest."

Although the corner in which he sat was so dim that I could distinguish none of his features very clearly, I saw that his eyes were still turned full upon me. And yet he answered never a word.

At any other time I should have felt, and perhaps expressed, some annoyance; but at that moment I felt too ill to do either. The icy coldness of the night air had struck a chill to my very marrow, and

the strange smell inside the coach was affecting me with an intolerable nausea. I shivered from head to foot, and, turning to my left-hand neighbour, asked if he had any objection to an open window.

He neither spoke nor stirred.

I repeated the question somewhat more loudly, but with the same result. Then I lost patience, and let the sash down. As I did so, the leather strap broke in my hand, and I observed that the glass was covered with a thick coat of mildew, the accumulation, apparently, of years. My attention being thus drawn to the condition of the coach, I examined it more narrowly, and saw by the uncertain light of the outer lamps that it was in the last state of dilapidation. Every part of it was not only out of repair, but in a state of actual decay. The sashes splintered at a touch. The leather fittings were crusted over with mould, and literally rotting from the woodwork. The floor was almost breaking away beneath my feet. The whole machine, in short, was foul with damp, and had evidently been dragged from some outhouse in which it had been moulder-ing away for years, to do another day or two of duty on the road.

I turned to the third passenger, whom I had not yet addressed, and hazarded one more remark.

"This coach," I said, "is in a deplorable condition. The regular mail, I suppose, is under repair?"

He moved his head slowly, and looked me in the face, without speaking a word. I shall never forget that look while I live. I turned cold at heart under

it. I turn cold at heart even now when I recal it. His eyes glowed with a fiery unnatural lustre. His face was livid as the face of a corpse. His bloodless lips were drawn back as if in the agony of death, and showed the gleaming teeth between.

The words that I was about to utter died upon my lips, and a strange horror came upon me. My sight had by this time become used to the gloom of the coach, and I could see with tolerable distinctness. I turned to my opposite neighbour. He, too, was looking at me, with the same startling pallor in his face, and the same stony glitter in his eyes. I passed my hand across my brow. I turned to the passenger on the seat beside my own, and saw — oh Heaven! how shall I describe what I saw? I saw that he was no living man — that none of them were living men, like myself! A pale phosphorescent light — the light of putrefaction — played upon their awful faces; upon their hair, dank with the dews of the grave; upon their clothes, earth-stained and dropping to pieces; upon their hands, which were as the hands of corpses long buried. Only their eyes, their terrible eyes, were living; and those eyes were all turned menacingly upon me!

A shriek of terror, a wild unintelligible cry for help and mercy, burst from my lips as I flung myself against the door, and strove in vain to open it.

In that single instant, brief and vivid as a landscape beheld in the flash of summer lightning, I saw the moon shining down through a rift of stormy cloud — the ghastly sign-post rearing its warning finger by the wayside — the broken parapet — the

plunging horses — the black gulf below. Then the coach reeled like a ship at sea. Then came a mighty crash — a sense of crushing pain — and then, darkness.

It seemed as if years had gone by, when I awoke one morning from a deep sleep, and found my wife watching by my bedside. I will pass over the scene that ensued, and give you, in half a dozen words, the tale she told me with tears of thanksgiving. I had fallen over a precipice, close against the junction of the old coach-road and the new, and had only been saved from certain death by lighting upon a deep snowdrift that had accumulated at the foot of the rock beneath. In this snowdrift I was discovered at daybreak by a couple of shepherds, who carried me to the nearest shelter, and brought a surgeon to my aid. The surgeon found me in a state of raving delirium, with a broken arm and a compound fracture of the skull. The letters in my pocket-book showed my name and address; my wife was summoned to nurse me; and, thanks to youth and a fine constitution, I came out of danger at last. The place of my fall, I need scarcely say, was precisely that at which a frightful accident had happened to the north mail nine years before.

I never told my wife the fearful events which I have just related to you. I told the surgeon who attended me; but he treated the whole adventure as a mere dream born of the fever in my brain. We discussed the question over and over again, until we found that we could discuss it with temper no longer,

and then we dropped it. Others may form what conclusions they please — I *know* that twenty years ago I was the fourth inside passenger in that Phantom Coach.

CHAPTER VIII.

We had at last come to the end of the Bundle of Waste Paper.

Like the learned translator of the Thousand and One Nights, I have given the stories in their succession, without recording by whom they were read, or where interrupted. It is enough that they amused our little party for the best part of two days, and that we had just finished the series when Sir Geoffrey Buchanan came to announce that the yacht was once more in sailing order.

We had been sitting in the scanty shade of our little clump of trees, and Miss Carew had been the last reader. She laid the page aside, and looked regretfully around.

"Like the prisoner of Chillon," said she, "I am almost disposed to regain my freedom with a sigh. It is a strange, desolate little place; but I have taken a fancy for it."

"If you have taken a fancy for it, Miss Carew," said our friend the rector, "why don't you buy it? You are one of fortune's spoiled darlings, and are born to have whatever you cry for — moon and stars included."

Miss Carew smiled, as if the idea were not quite new to her.

"I do not suppose it is for sale," she replied.

"Nor I; but you may depend that the owner, whosoever he may be, would be only too glad to get rid of it."

"Do you think so? It is not a bad idea. What do you say, Sir Geoffrey? Would it not be nice to own a real island, and fit it up *à la* Robinson Crusoe, with goats and a hermitage, and a man Friday?"

"I think it would be delightful," laughed Sir Geoffrey; "especially for the man Friday."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Brewer, "I shall apply for the situation."

"Pray do not give yourself that trouble," said Miss Carew. "Your character would not suit."

"I hope I shall be excused for remarking, in the words of the poet, that 'my bark is on the sea,'" said Sir Geoffrey.

"May we not make the tour of the island once more, before we go?" suggested Miss Carew.

Sir Geoffrey glanced at his watch.

"It is already seven o'clock," said he, "and there is scarcely a breath of air. We shall be four hours on the water."

"But there is a magnificent moon, and I delight in the sea by moonlight."

"Of course you must go round, if you particularly wish it," replied Buchanan, giving her his arm. "Are we not created to obey you?"

So they led the way, and we followed.

I have said that the island terminated towards the north in a rocky promontory overhanging the

sea. It was to this point that Miss Carew and Sir Geoffrey now hastened. The rest presently turned back, leaving the two pioneers to reach the summit alone; whilst I, strolling leisurely on, arrived there a few moments later.

"I reminds me of the wonderful island we were reading about yesterday," said Miss Carew, looking round with a bright smile. "There is the ship, and yonder the mysterious city of the golden domes."

"The golden domes," said I, laughing, "look a little the worse for wear."

"True, and one misses the idol with the ruby eyes."

"What the deuce are you two talking about?" put in Sir Geoffrey.

"Of a marvellous story called 'The Discovery of the Treasure Isles,'" replied Miss Carew. "I will tell you all about it when we are on board, if you are not too busy to listen to me."

"'The Discovery of the Treasure Isles?'" repeated Buchanan, "Oh, I know that story by heart. My boy has it, and — why, surely, Phil, *you* wrote it?"

If my mother earth would but have gaped and swallowed me at that moment, I would have thankfully consented to be buried alive.

"I!" I stammered. "Certainly not — nothing of the kind."

"Nonsense — I'm positive of it. It came out in a magazine, and you sent it to Willy yourself. I remember all the circumstances perfectly."

"Perhaps you remember the Deluge?" I said, mpatiently. "Or the siege of Troy?"

"Or perhaps you are misled, Sir Geoffrey, by ome coincidence of names," suggested Miss Carew. 'Now, as it happens, *I* know who the author of this tory really is."

"Do you? Do you, indeed?" said my friend, ooking thoroughly puzzled. "Well, in that case, of ourse I . . . . but it's really very odd. I could have worn to the idol with the ruby eyes."

"And, stranger still, I know the author of every ne of those stories that we have been reading these ast two days," added Miss Carew.

"What! in the bundle of Waste Paper?"

"Yes."

Sir Geoffrey laughed, and shrugged his broad houlders.

"Poor devil!" he ejaculated. "I suppose you on't tell him where you saw them last?"

"Of course not."

"It wouldn't be a very delicate compliment, ould it? Fancy the feelings of an author who sees imself at the grocer's! There's an illustration of Alexander dead and turned to clay,' for you. How ould *you* like it, Phil, my boy?"

Dearly as I loved Geoffrey Buchanan, I could ave hanged, drawn, and quartered him at that mo- ient with perfect satisfaction.

"I must take my chance of the grocer as well s others," I replied, with the best air of indifference at I could muster. "I dare say I have furnished ie letter-press to a pound of butter before now."

Miss Carew mercifully turned the conversation.

"Pray do not linger here any longer on my account," she said. "I have surveyed my future kingdom 'from the centre all round to the sea,' and, I fear, have kept our friends unreasonably long already."

"And do you really think you will buy the place?" said Buchanan. "Or is it only a joke?"

"I really think I will buy it, if the owner will sell it to me."

"What a droll notion!"

"That is just why I entertain it."

"But what will you do with the island, when you have got it?"

"People it with poll-parrots and monkeys, and make my subjects tattoo themselves."

"Then I hope you will pass a law compelling them to become cannibals as well," laughed Sir Geoffrey.

"I will do more than that," replied Miss Carew; "I will cause my good friend Sir Geoffrey Buchanan to be given over to my faithful islanders for their first grand banquet in honour of the new *régime*."

Sir Geoffrey shook his head.

"No, no," said he. "I am a family man, and cannot be spared. You must sacrifice some unencumbered youngster like Phil Dundonald, who is of no value to himself or anybody else."

"I am sure," said I, "that Miss Carew will not make so unwise an exchange. Authors are not half such good eating as baronets."

And thus, talking sheer nonsense by the way, we went down to the landing-place, where the whole population of the island was drawn up to witness our departure. We found the rest of our party already on board, and Sir Geoffrey's mate impatient to take advantage of a light breeze that had just sprung up in our favour; but Miss Carew would not be hurried. She had a few kind words and a ready purse for all; and after we had put off from shore and begun to stand out to sea, I saw plainly enough that it was to her the little children stretched out their tiny arms, and to her their mothers dropped their farewell curtsies.

I was horribly uncomfortable. I had tried to seem gay and unconcerned as we came down to the shore; but I was on thorns the whole time. What *could* Miss Carew have meant by saying that she knew the author of the bundle of Waste Paper? It was impossible that she should have intended any allusion to myself; and yet, if she did not mean myself, whom could she mean? If she meant me, then she knew who sent her those hapless three volumes bound in white morocco. If she meant me, then she had read my rash dedication, and knew that I loved her. If she meant me, then she knew that she herself was "Miss * * * * *," and that my book had been sold off for — waste paper!

But supposing that she did not mean me, after all?

Ay, there was the rub; for in that case, I could only conclude that some base imposter had taken advantage of my incognito, my dedication, and my

capricious woman on earth. You would not have believed her, if you had known her better."

"You speak as if you knew her very well yourself," said I, irritably.

The rector of Broadmere looked at me with some surprise.

"I have the honour of being tolerably well acquainted with Miss Carew," he said, with rather more gravity of manner. "She has permitted me to be her almoner from time to time, and my youngest child is her god-daughter."

"And what about the island?"

"She talks of rebuilding the cottages, improving the little harbour, and erecting a tiny chapel and school-house. Those poor little infants, you know, are growing up without any kind of teaching; and as for religious instruction, why, not one of them has ever been inside a church-door in its life!"

"That's true," I replied. "And I doubt if the parents are much better off. One of the women said that she had not been over to the main-land for eleven years. But supposing both chapel and school-house built, where will you find a curate who would undertake such a miserable office?"

"Miss Carew can hardly hope to induce any clerk in holy orders to settle there, of course," said the rector, with a smile. "I wouldn't do it myself, for a bishopric; but I can easily find her some upright, well-taught, earnest teacher, who will instruct the children, read and pray with the parents, and act as her steward in general matters."

"In this case, of what use will the chapel be?"

"Oh, yes!" I replied, sulkily. "Of course."

"I think it's the most enchanting place in the world," said the rector.

"Except Naples."

"Not excepting the garden of Eden. Give me one thousand pounds a year, an old Venetian palazzo, a good library, and a gondola, and I would not change lots with the Emperor of all the Russias."

To this observation I made no reply. I was thoroughly out of humour, and did not wish to talk if I could help it.

"What a delightful creature that is yonder!" said the rector, after a brief pause.

"Do you mean Mrs. Macpherson?"

"Do I mean Hecate? Whom should I mean but Miss Carew?"

"Humph!"

"She has been talking to me about that island. She really means to buy it, if it can be bought."

"I know she does. What of it?"

"Well, a good deal. She will do much for the welfare of those poor families. It is their uncared-for, isolated condition that has put the idea of purchasing the place into her head."

"Indeed!"

"Ay — that, and nothing else. You didn't suppose it was a mere whim, did you?"

"She spoke of it as a whim."

"That's her way. All her good deeds, according to her own statements, are caprices; but then her good deeds are so many, that she must be the most

white morocco; and that was almost more unbearable still!

Revolving these perplexing possibilities in the silence of my thoughts, I strolled gloomily to and fro the little fore-deck, and kept aloof from the ladies. I was more than ever in love; and, if that could be, more than ever in despair. Romantic and visionary as I was in many ways, I in nowise deluded myself about Miss Carew. I understood my position perfectly. I knew that I was less to her than "a primrose by a river's brim" — in fact that a primrose under those conditions would really possess a degree of interest for her that I could never hope to achieve under any circumstances whatever. I was well aware, too, that I had not shown to advantage at Seaborough Court. I had been shy, nervous, and silent; and though my gloves and boots were triumphs of tightness, I knew quite well that Miss Carew's obdurate heart was unapproachable on the side of either French kid, or patent leather. In short, my love was hopeless. I had never supposed it could be otherwise; but custom made that unwelcome piece of knowledge none the less bitter.

It was now getting dusk. The little isle had long since dwindled to a mere speck; a languid air was abroad; and the moon was rising.

"How delicious this is!" said Mr. Stone, joining me where I stood leaning moodily over the side of the vessel. "How smoothly we glide along! A gondola could scarcely cleave the waters with a less perceptible motion than this dear little yacht. Have you been in Venice?"

"I expected you to ask that question," he replied. "Miss Carew is of opinion that some arrangement may be made with one of the neighbouring clergy to go over about once in every month or six weeks, and give them a church-service and sermon. I think there will be no difficulty in the matter, myself."

"How good she is!" I exclaimed, warmly.

"She is an angel, and I wish there were more like her. The worst of it is, that such women make us feel like mere Calibans."

"I don't believe there's a man on earth who is worthy of her!" said I.

"I will not go so far as to agree with you in that proposition; but I have certainly never had the pleasure of knowing him, if there be."

And with this consolatory remark, the rector strolled away, and left me again to my meditations.

By this time the moon had risen, and the sea was one sheet of undulating silver. There was not another sail in sight; and the yacht glided along — as Mr. Stone had justly observed — like a gondola. Overhead clustered the innumerable stars; and not a sound was audible, save the merry chattering of the party on the after-deck, and the low "swish" of the waters as they parted before our prow. Now and then, for a moment only, a few faint sparkles of phosphorescent light gleamed and vanished in our track; but they came and went as suddenly as though a handful of jewels had been flung into the sea. Suddenly the talkers were all silent, and Miss Carew

began to sing. I listened as if spell-bound, while her pure, delicious voice rose, and fell, and died away upon the breathless air. Except that it was a simple, pathetic, north-country ballad, sung to a wild Indian chant, I remember nothing of the song; but I know that her voice seemed to fill the night with its sweetness, and that I drank in its melody as eagerly as one to whom "music is the food of love," and whose appetite for that sweet food can neither "sicken" nor "die."

A deep hush followed the last long, tremulous note; and then, after a little pause, she sang again.

Meanwhile, I stood apart in the moonlight, passionately listening.

"I expected you to ask that question," he replied. "Miss Carew is of opinion that some arrangement may be made with one of the neighbouring clergy to go over about once in every month or six weeks, and give them a church-service and sermon. I think there will be no difficulty in the matter, myself."

"How good she is!" I exclaimed, warmly.

"She is an angel, and I wish there were more like her. The worst of it is, that such women make us feel like mere Calibans."

"I don't believe there's a man on earth who is worthy of her!" said I.

"I will not go so far as to agree with you in that proposition; but I have certainly never had the pleasure of knowing him, if there be."

And with this consolatory remark, the rector strolled away, and left me again to my meditations.

By this time the moon had risen, and the sea was one sheet of undulating silver. There was not another sail in sight; and the yacht glided along — as Mr. Stone had justly observed — like a gondola. Overhead clustered the innumerable stars; and not a sound was audible, save the merry chattering of the party on the after-deck, and the low "swish" of the waters as they parted before our prow. Now and then, for a moment only, a few faint sparkles of phosphorescent light gleamed and vanished in our track; but they came and went as suddenly as though a handful of jewels had been flung into the sea. Suddenly the talkers were all silent, and Miss Carew

self to make it 'sooner,' when it might be 'later?' I know something's the matter."

"Indeed, nothing is the matter; but this sort of life is unsettling, and the longer I stay, the harder I shall find it to go."

"I never heard so absurd an argument — never, by Jove! You might as reasonably say that it's of no use for a man to be happy while he lives, because he must die in the end."

"My dear Geoffrey, you don't know what the habit of work is."

"I know that you shall not leave Seaborough Court this afternoon. Why, man, we've a dinner-party to-day!"

"Dinner-parties are perilous vanities. A pen-and-ink diet agrees with me better."

Sir Geoffrey shook his head.

"It's of no use," said he. "I *feel* that you are withholding something from me. If Brewer has offended you ...."

"Not in the least," I interrupted, eagerly. "I do not like Captain Brewer, and I never did like him; but he has done nothing to annoy me in any way."

"I'm sure I've tried to make the place pleasant to you," said Sir Geoffrey.

"You have made it delightful. I only came, you know, for a week or ten days, and I have already stayed nearly three weeks. That doesn't look as if I found Seaborough Court very dreary — does it?"

"And yet you want to leave us!"

"And yet I feel that I ought to leave you —

hat I must leave you. And when it comes to ought' and 'must,' the sooner a thing is done the etter."

"Perhaps so; and yet ... Well, you assure me t all events, that it is business, and only business, hat calls you away?"

"Good heavens, Buchanan!" I exclaimed impatiently, "are you counsel for the plaintiff, and am the prisoner at the bar? I tell you it is better for ne to go — is not that enough?"

"Better for you!" he repeated.

"Yes. The air of Durham disagrees with me. Do you understand that?"

"I don't believe it!" shouted he, bringing down his tremendous fist upon the table with a thump hat almost shook the books on the bookshelves. It's the best air in England! It's the best air...."

"It's the best air in all the world for me, my ood fellow," said I, going over to the window, when it's not breathed at the same time by Miss Carew."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Sir Geoffrey, drawing a eep breath.

"Ay," I replied, bitterly. "Now you have it. hope you are content."

"Upon my soul, Phil," said he, "I'm more grieved ian I know how to tell you. I had no idea of this – not the faintest idea in the world.

"I did not intend that you should have any idea f it."

"No, no — of course not. Only I couldn't think hy you should want to run away."

self to make it 'sooner,' when it might be 'later?' I know something's the matter."

"Indeed, nothing is the matter; but this sort of life is unsettling, and the longer I stay, the harder I shall find it to go."

"I never heard so absurd an argument — never, by Jove! You might as reasonably say that it's of no use for a man to be happy while he lives, because he must die in the end."

"My dear Geoffrey, you don't know what the habit of work is."

"I know that you shall not leave Seaborough Court this afternoon. Why, man, we've a dinner-party to-day!"

"Dinner-parties are perilous vanities. A pen-and-ink diet agrees with me better."

Sir Geoffrey shook his head.

"It's of no use," said he. "I *feel* that you are withholding something from me. If Brewer has offended you ...."

"Not in the least," I interrupted, eagerly. "I do not like Captain Brewer, and I never did like him; but he has done nothing to annoy me in any way."

"I'm sure I've tried to make the place pleasant to you," said Sir Geoffrey.

"You have made it delightful. I only came, you know, for a week or ten days, and I have already stayed nearly three weeks. That doesn't look as if I found Seaborough Court very dreary — does it?"

"And yet you want to leave us!"

"And yet I feel that I ought to leave you —

that I must leave you. And when it comes to 'ought' and 'must,' the sooner a thing is done the better."

"Perhaps so; and yet ... Well, you assure me at all events, that it is business, and only business, that calls you away?"

"Good heavens, Buchanan!" I exclaimed impatiently, "are you counsel for the plaintiff, and am I the prisoner at the bar? I tell you it is better for me to go — is not that enough?"

"Better for you!" he repeated.

"Yes. The air of Durham disagrees with me. Do you understand that?"

"I don't believe it!" shouted he, bringing down his tremendous fist upon the table with a thump that almost shook the books on the bookshelves. "It's the best air in England! It's the best air...."

"It's the best air in all the world for me, my good fellow," said I, going over to the window, "when it's not breathed at the same time by Miss Carew."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Sir Geoffrey, drawing a deep breath.

"Ay," I replied, bitterly. "Now you have it. I hope you are content."

"Upon my soul, Phil," said he, "I'm more grieved than I know how to tell you. I had no idea of this — not the faintest idea in the world.

"I did not intend that you should have any idea of it."

"No, no — of course not. Only I couldn't think why you should want to run away."

"Well, you know now," said I, still at the window, with my back towards him.

"I almost wish I did not. I shall always reproach myself for bringing you so much together. I might have guessed what was likely to happen — but then I'm such a confounded idiot!"

"Do not reproach yourself," said I. "It is no fault of yours. I've loved her ever since last December."

"The deuce you have! Why, that makes it all the worse. Ah, Phil! you'll hate ever to come again to Seaborough Court!"

"It won't make a bit of difference, my dear fellow," said I forcing a smile. "I'll come down to you again in the autumn, and help you to shoot off the ptarmigan."

"Will you, though? Mind, then, I book you for that promise. In the meanwhile, we'll have some luncheon in here, all to ourselves; and I'll drive you over to the station afterwards. You'd rather not see her again, of course."

"I should not think of going away without seeing her," I replied. "I shall take my leave of her precisely as I shall take my leave of your other guests."

"That's right, my boy. Perhaps you'd rather go in to luncheon, as usual?"

"I should prefer to do so, certainly."

Sir Geoffrey came over to the window, and laid his hand affectionately upon my shoulder.

"I like your spirit, Phil," said he. "I don't believe *I* should have held my own so gallantly,

"Oh, yes!" I replied, sulkily. "Of course."

"I think it's the most enchanting place in the world," said the rector.

"Except Naples."

"Not excepting the garden of Eden. Give me one thousand pounds a year, an old Venetian palazzo, a good library, and a gondola, and I would not change lots with the Emperor of all the Russias."

To this observation I made no reply. I was thoroughly out of humour, and did not wish to talk if I could help it.

"What a delightful creature that is yonder!" said the rector, after a brief pause.

"Do you mean Mrs. Macpherson?"

"Do I mean Hecate? Whom should I mean but Miss Carew?"

"Humph!"

"She has been talking to me about that island. She really means to buy it, if it can be bought."

"I know she does. What of it?"

"Well, a good deal. She will do much for the welfare of those poor families. It is their uncared-for, isolated condition that has put the idea of purchasing the place into her head."

"Indeed!"

"Ay — that, and nothing else. You didn't suppose it was a mere whim, did you?"

"She spoke of it as a whim."

"That's her way. All her good deeds, according to her own statements, are caprices; but then her good deeds are so many, that she must be the most

"Well, you know now," said I, still at the window, with my back towards him.

"I almost wish I did not. I shall always reproach myself for bringing you so much together. I might have guessed what was likely to happen — but then I'm such a confounded idiot!"

"Do not reproach yourself," said I. "It is no fault of yours. I've loved her ever since last December."

"The deuce you have! Why, that makes it all the worse. Ah, Phil! you'll hate ever to come again to Seaborough Court!"

"It won't make a bit of difference, my dear fellow," said I forcing a smile. "I'll come down to you again in the autumn, and help you to shoot off the ptarmigan."

"Will you, though? Mind, then, I book you for that promise. In the meanwhile, we'll have some luncheon in here, all to ourselves; and I'll drive you over to the station afterwards. You'd rather not see her again, of course."

"I should not think of going away without seeing her," I replied. "I shall take my leave of her precisely as I shall take my leave of your other guests."

"That's right, my boy. Perhaps you'd rather go in to luncheon, as usual?"

"I should prefer to do so, certainly."

Sir Geoffrey came over to the window, and laid his hand affectionately upon my shoulder.

"I like your spirit, Phil," said he. "I don't believe *I* should have held my own so gallantly,

"I expected you to ask that question," he replied. "Miss Carew is of opinion that some arrangement may be made with one of the neighbouring clergy to go over about once in every month or six weeks, and give them a church-service and sermon. I think there will be no difficulty in the matter, myself."

"How good she is!" I exclaimed, warmly.

"She is an angel, and I wish there were more like her. The worst of it is, that such women make us feel like mere Calibans."

"I don't believe there's a man on earth who is worthy of her!" said I.

"I will not go so far as to agree with you in that proposition; but I have certainly never had the pleasure of knowing him, if there be."

And with this consolatory remark, the rector strolled away, and left me again to my meditations.

By this time the moon had risen, and the sea was one sheet of undulating silver. There was not another sail in sight; and the yacht glided along — as Mr. Stone had justly observed — like a gondola. Overhead clustered the innumerable stars; and not a sound was audible, save the merry chattering of the party on the after-deck, and the low "swish" of the waters as they parted before our prow. Now and then, for a moment only, a few faint sparkles of phosphorescent light gleamed and vanished in our track; but they came and went as suddenly as though a handful of jewels had been flung into the sea. Suddenly the talkers were all silent, and Miss Carew

began to sing. I listened as if spell-bound, while her pure, delicious voice rose, and fell, and died away upon the breathless air. Except that it was a simple, pathetic, north-country ballad, sung to a wild Indian chant, I remember nothing of the song; but I know that her voice seemed to fill the night with its sweetness, and that I drank in its melody as eagerly as one to whom "music is the food of love," and whose appetite for that sweet food can neither "sicken" nor "die."

A deep hush followed the last long, tremulous note; and then, after a little pause, she sang again.

Meanwhile, I stood apart in the moonlight, passionately listening.

CHAPTER IX.

"One word with you, Buchanan," said I, "before you go out."

We were passing through the hall, and he had his hat in his hand; but he turned back at this, and followed me into the library.

"Well, Phil," said he, "what is it?"

"I am afraid I must make holiday no longer," I replied.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I must go home to my work, like a good boy."

"Nonsense! we'll talk of that a month hence."

"Indeed we won't. We must talk of it this morning."

"Why this morning? When do you want to go?"

"I think I must go this afternoon."

"This afternoon?" repeated Sir Geoffrey, quickly. "What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened," I replied; "but I have been here close upon three weeks, and I have made up my mind to remain idle no longer. The pleasantest things must come to an end, sooner or later."

"Why the deuce, then, should you trouble your-

self to make it 'sooner,' when it might be 'later?' I know something's the matter."

"Indeed, nothing is the matter; but this sort of life is unsettling, and the longer I stay, the harder I shall find it to go."

"I never heard so absurd an argument — never, by Jove! You might as reasonably say that it's of no use for a man to be happy while he lives, because he must die in the end."

"My dear Geoffrey, you don't know what the habit of work is."

"I know that you shall not leave Seaborough Court this afternoon. Why, man, we've a dinner-party to-day!"

"Dinner-parties are perilous vanities. A pen-and-ink diet agrees with me better."

Sir Geoffrey shook his head.

"It's of no use," said he. "I *feel* that you are withholding something from me. If Brewer has offended you ...."

"Not in the least," I interrupted, eagerly. "I do not like Captain Brewer, and I never did like him; but he has done nothing to annoy me in any way."

"I'm sure I've tried to make the place pleasant to you," said Sir Geoffrey.

"You have made it delightful. I only came, you know, for a week or ten days, and I have already stayed nearly three weeks. That doesn't look as if I found Seaborough Court very dreary — does it?"

"And yet you want to leave us!"

"And yet I feel that I ought to leave you —

that I must leave you. And when it comes to 'ought' and 'must,' the sooner a thing is done the better."

"Perhaps so; and yet ... Well, you assure me at all events, that it is business, and only business, that calls you away?"

"Good heavens, Buchanan!" I exclaimed impatiently, "are you counsel for the plaintiff, and am I the prisoner at the bar? I tell you it is better for me to go — is not that enough?"

"Better for you!" he repeated.

"Yes. The air of Durham disagrees with me. Do you understand that?"

"I don't believe it!" shouted he, bringing down his tremendous fist upon the table with a thump that almost shook the books on the bookshelves. "It's the best air in England! It's the best air...."

"It's the best air in all the world for me, my good fellow," said I, going over to the window, "when it's not breathed at the same time by Miss Carew."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Sir Geoffrey, drawing a deep breath.

"Ay," I replied, bitterly. "Now you have it. I hope you are content."

"Upon my soul, Phil," said he, "I'm more grieved than I know how to tell you. I had no idea of this — not the faintest idea in the world.

"I did not intend that you should have any idea of it."

"No, no — of course not. Only I couldn't think why you should want to run away."

"Well, you know now," said I, still at the window, with my back towards him.

"I almost wish I did not. I shall always reproach myself for bringing you so much together. I might have guessed what was likely to happen — but then I'm such a confounded idiot!"

"Do not reproach yourself," said I. "It is no fault of yours. I've loved her ever since last December."

"The deuce you have! Why, that makes it all the worse. Ah, Phil! you'll hate ever to come again to Seaborough Court!"

"It won't make a bit of difference, my dear fellow," said I forcing a smile. "I'll come down to you again in the autumn, and help you to shoot off the ptarmigan."

"Will you, though? Mind, then, I book you for that promise. In the meanwhile, we'll have some luncheon in here, all to ourselves; and I'll drive you over to the station afterwards. You'd rather not see her again, of course."

"I should not think of going away without seeing her," I replied. "I shall take my leave of her precisely as I shall take my leave of your other guests."

"That's right, my boy. Perhaps you'd rather go in to luncheon, as usual?"

"I should prefer to do so, certainly."

Sir Geoffrey came over to the window, and laid his hand affectionately upon my shoulder.

"I like your spirit, Phil," said he. "I don't believe *I* should have held my own so gallantly,

ad I been in your place — upon my soul I on't!"

His praises puzzled me. I felt as if I were beating somewhat ignominious retreat, and was wholly unonscious of any heroic impulse.

"The only wonder to me," continued Sir Geoffrey, is how she could be so blind and perverse as to refuse ou!"

"Refuse me!" I cried. "Miss Carew has not efused me!"

"*Not* refused you? Do you mean that she has ccepted you?"

"No, sir. Certaintly not."

"Confound it man! She must have done one hing or the other!"

"Then I beg to assure you that she has done either the one thing nor the other — and for the est reason in the world. I have not asked her."

Sir Geoffrey looked at me for a moment very ravely; and then burst into such an inextinguishable oar of laughter as constrained him to go stamping p and down the room for several minutes. Thoroughly xhausted at last, he dropped into a chair, and wiped is face with his handkerchief.

"Never asked her!" he exclaimed in breathless asps. "By Jove! — there's a suitor for you! Never sked her! — and I, throwing away my sympathy or nothing!"

"Laugh as much as you please," I said, now eally angry; "but how could I — a poor devil, ving literally by such few wits as heaven has given ne — presume to offer marriage to Miss Carew!"

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Sir Geoffrey, "Miss Carew is not a vestal virgin."

"But she is a great heiress; and I have not a penny in the world that I don't earn by my pen."

"In short, you think that, being so rich already, Miss Carew cannot possibly marry unless to become still richer! That's a rotten theory!"

"I know it; but it is the creed of the world."

"Then you may take my word for it that Miss Carew is too good and too wise a young woman, to pin her faith upon the creed of the world. Nonsense, man — if you really love her, tell her so, and have done with it!"

"I would go to her this moment," said I, "if she were as poor as myself."

"But as she happens, instead, to enjoy about fifteen thousand a year in landed property, you think it more dignified and romantic to go back to London without having fired a single shot! By all the Gods, Phil, it's just the most ridiculous thing I have ever known in my life!"

"I can't help it, if it is."

"For *can't* read *won't* — and for *won't*, read pride, vainglory and hypocrisy!"

"It is of no use, Sir Geoffrey. You may laugh at me, or you may blow me up; but you will not shake my resolution."

Sir Geoffrey shrugged his shoulders. I could see that he thought me beyond the pale of common sense.

"At least, then," he said, "you will stay for another week?"

ıad I been in your place — upon my soul I lon't!"

His praises puzzled me. I felt as if I were beating ı somewhat ignominious retreat, and was wholly un-ɔnscious of any heroic impulse.

"The only wonder to me," continued Sir Geoffrey, 'is how she could be so blind and perverse as to refuse ʏou!"

"Refuse me!" I cried. "Miss Carew has not efused me!"

"*Not* refused you? Do you mean that she has ıccepted you?"

"No, sir. Certainly not."

"Confound it man! She must have done one hing or the other!"

"Then I beg to assure you that she has done ıeither the one thing nor the other — and for the ɔest reason in the world. I have not asked her."

Sir Geoffrey looked at me for a moment very ɟravely; and then burst into such an inextinguishable ɔar of laughter as constrained him to go stamping ıp and down the room for several minutes. Thoroughly ıxhausted at last, he dropped into a chair, and wiped ıis face with his handkerchief.

"Never asked her!" he exclaimed in breathless ɟasps. "By Jove! — there's a suitor for you! Never ısked her! — and I, throwing away my sympathy ɔr nothing!"

"Laugh as much as you please," I said, now eally angry; "but how could I — a poor devil, iving literally by such few wits as heaven has given ne — presume to offer marriage to Miss Carew!"

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Sir Geoffrey, "Miss Carew is not a vestal virgin."

"But she is a great heiress; and I have not a penny in the world that I don't earn by my pen."

"In short, you think that, being so rich already, Miss Carew cannot possibly marry unless to become still richer! That's a rotten theory!"

"I know it; but it is the creed of the world."

"Then you may take my word for it that Miss Carew is too good and too wise a young woman, to pin her faith upon the creed of the world. Nonsense, man — if you really love her, tell her so, and have done with it!"

"I would go to her this moment," said I, "if she were as poor as myself."

"But as she happens, instead, to enjoy about fifteen thousand a year in landed property, you think it more dignified and romantic to go back to London without having fired a single shot! By all the Gods, Phil, it's just the most ridiculous thing I have ever known in my life!"

"I can't help it, if it is."

"For *can't* read *won't* — and for *won't*, read pride, vainglory and hypocrisy!"

"It is of no use, Sir Geoffrey. You may laugh at me, or you may blow me up; but you will not shake my resolution."

Sir Geoffrey shrugged his shoulders. I could see that he thought me beyond the pale of common sense.

"At least, then," he said, "you will stay for another week?"

"I will stay for your dinner-party this evening," I replied; "but I have made up my mind to go back to town to-morrow."

And then Sir Geoffrey saw that I was in earnest, and said no more.

I was in earnest. I had good reason to be in earnest. I loved her; and the longer I stayed, the worse it would be for me.

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Sir Geoffrey, "Miss Carew is not a vestal virgin."

"But she is a great heiress; and I have not a penny in the world that I don't earn by my pen."

"In short, you think that, being so rich already, Miss Carew cannot possibly marry unless to become still richer! That's a rotten theory!"

"I know it; but it is the creed of the world."

"Then you may take my word for it that Miss Carew is too good and too wise a young woman, to pin her faith upon the creed of the world. Nonsense, man — if you really love her, tell her so, and have done with it!"

"I would go to her this moment," said I, "if she were as poor as myself."

"But as she happens, instead, to enjoy about fifteen thousand a year in landed property, you think it more dignified and romantic to go back to London without having fired a single shot! By all the Gods, Phil, it's just the most ridiculous thing I have ever known in my life!"

"I can't help it, if it is."

"For *can't* read *won't* — and for *won't*, read pride, vainglory and hypocrisy!"

"It is of no use, Sir Geoffrey. You may laugh at me, or you may blow me up; but you will not shake my resolution."

Sir Geoffrey shrugged his shoulders. I could see that he thought me beyond the pale of common sense.

"At least, then," he said, "you will stay for another week?"

"I will stay for your dinner-party this evening," I replied; "but I have made up my mind to go back to town to-morrow."

And then Sir Geoffrey saw that I was in earnest, and said no more.

I was in earnest. I had good reason to be in earnest. I loved her; and the longer I stayed, the worse it would be for me.

CHAPTER X.

THERE were two postal deliveries every day at Seaborough Court; one early in the morning, and the other at six o'clock in the afternoon. By the morning's delivery, we received our letters at the breakfast table; by the afternoon, just about the time when the first dressing-bell was rung. We dined at seven; and as I seldom came in till half-past six, I generally found my budget awaiting me in my bedroom. On that particular day — that day which was to be my last at Seaborough Court — I had remained out so late and had ridden so far, that it wanted but a quarter to seven when I dismounted at the entrance to Sir Geoffrey's stables, flung the reins to a groom, and ran upstairs to dress for dinner.

I found my table, as usual, strewn with letters and papers. I had no time to examine them very closely: but I glanced at the envelopes, and, seeing only one handwriting with which I was not acquainted, separated that letter from the rest, to be read when the more important business of dressing was completed.

It did not take very long. I was less particular about my appearance now. As the hopelessness of my love forced itself more and more upon me, I lost

faith in my tailor, and my passion for pomade sensibly diminished. To speak seriously, I was unsettled and unhappy — feverishly anxious to get away from the scene of my trouble, and yet unwilling to go. So I dressed quickly, and opened my letter.

It bore an unaccustomed postage stamp, and was dated from Calcutta.

"Sir," it ran, "I am instructed by the proprietors of the *Calcutta Thunderer* to offer you the appointment of editor, now vacant by the retirement of George Tunstall, Esq. The editorial salary amounts to twelve thousand rupees per annum; and a suite of apartments will be assigned to you in the establishment. Should this proposition meet your views, you will be required to enter upon the duties by the first of October next at latest, and we shall hope to see you in Calcutta in the course of September. A reply by next mail will oblige.

"I am, sir, your obedient Servant,

"J. JOHNSON, *Sec.*"

Editor of the *Calcutta Thunderer*, with a salary of twelve thousand rupees a year, and a suite of rooms in the establishment! I could hardly believe it. Twelve thousand rupees per annum! I seized a pen and made a rough calculation of the amount. Taking the rupee at two shillings, instead of two shillings and fourpence, it came to no less a sum than six hundred a year English! The prospect of such wealth bewildered me. I could hardly realise it. I read the letter again, to make certain that it

CHAPTER X.

THERE were two postal deliveries every day at Seaborough Court; one early in the morning, and the other at six o'clock in the afternoon. By the morning's delivery, we received our letters at the breakfast table; by the afternoon, just about the time when the first dressing-bell was rung. We dined at seven; and as I seldom came in till half-past six, I generally found my budget awaiting me in my bedroom. On that particular day — that day which was to be my last at Seaborough Court — I had remained out so late and had ridden so far, that it wanted but a quarter to seven when I dismounted at the entrance to Sir Geoffrey's stables, flung the reins to a groom, and ran upstairs to dress for dinner.

I found my table, as usual, strewn with letters and papers. I had no time to examine them very closely: but I glanced at the envelopes, and, seeing only one handwriting with which I was not acquainted, separated that letter from the rest, to be read when the more important business of dressing was completed.

It did not take very long. I was less particular about my appearance now. As the hopelessness of my love forced itself more and more upon me, I lost

faith in my tailor, and my passion for pomade sensibly diminished. To speak seriously, I was unsettled and unhappy — feverishly anxious to get away from the scene of my trouble, and yet unwilling to go. So I dressed quickly, and opened my letter.

It bore an unaccustomed postage stamp, and was dated from Calcutta.

"Sir," it ran, "I am instructed by the proprietors of the *Calcutta Thunderer* to offer you the appointment of editor, now vacant by the retirement of George Tunstall, Esq. The editorial salary amounts to twelve thousand rupees per annum; and a suite of apartments will be assigned to you in the establishment. Should this proposition meet your views, you will be required to enter upon the duties by the first of October next at latest, and we shall hope to see you in Calcutta in the course of September. A reply by next mail will oblige.

"I am, sir, your obedient Servant,

"J. JOHNSON, *Sec.*"

Editor of the *Calcutta Thunderer*, with a salary of twelve thousand rupees a year, and a suite of rooms in the establishment! I could hardly believe it. Twelve thousand rupees per annum! I seized a pen and made a rough calculation of the amount. Taking the rupee at two shillings, instead of two shillings and fourpence, it came to no less a sum than six hundred a year English! The prospect of such wealth bewildered me. I could hardly realise it. I read the letter again, to make certain that it

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Sir Geoffrey, "Miss Carew is not a vestal virgin."

"But she is a great heiress; and I have not a penny in the world that I don't earn by my pen."

"In short, you think that, being so rich already, Miss Carew cannot possibly marry unless to become still richer! That's a rotten theory!"

"I know it; but it is the creed of the world."

"Then you may take my word for it that Miss Carew is too good and too wise a young woman, to pin her faith upon the creed of the world. Nonsense, man — if you really love her, tell her so, and have done with it!"

"I would go to her this moment," said I, "if she were as poor as myself."

"But as she happens, instead, to enjoy about fifteen thousand a year in landed property, you think it more dignified and romantic to go back to London without having fired a single shot! By all the Gods, Phil, it's just the most ridiculous thing I have ever known in my life!"

"I can't help it, if it is."

"For *can't* read *won't* — and for *won't*, read pride, vainglory and hypocrisy!"

"It is of no use, Sir Geoffrey. You may laugh at me, or you may blow me up; but you will not shake my resolution."

Sir Geoffrey shrugged his shoulders. I could see that he thought me beyond the pale of common sense.

"At least, then," he said, "you will stay for another week?"

somewhat to my surprise, that Lady Buchanan, Mrs. Macpherson, and Miss Carew, knew all about it.

"I suppose we must congratulate you, Mr. Dundonald," said my friend's wife, making room for me on the sofa beside herself; "but you must condole with us. We are inconsolable at the prospect of losing you."

"You will forget your English friends," said Mrs. Macpherson, reproachfully.

"Not so soon, I fear, as my English friends will forget me," I replied. "Exiles have longer memories than they who stay at home among those they love."

"Then why do the exiles go away?" asked Miss Carew, with an indifferent smile. "Why do they not also stay at home with those they love?"

"The exiles, madam," I replied, "cannot always choose. It happens sometimes that they are poor; and foreign gold is better than none. And it sometimes happens that those whom they love do not love them."

"In which case, I presume, the foreign gold consoles them," laughed Miss Carew. "The pagoda-tree covers a multitude of sorrows, does it not?"

"I shall be better able to reply to that question twenty-five years hence," said I; "if I survive the rice and curry treatment so long."

"Five-and-twenty years hence!" repeated Lady Buchanan. "You surely do not mean to remain a quarter of a century in Calcutta?"

"I think it probable that, when I once settle in India, I shall be in no haste to return," I replied.

was all true; and, having made certain, sat down to consider what I ought to do.

Of course I must accept the appointment — I should be mad to refuse it. It was the greatest literary windfall that had ever tumbled into my lap; and it could not come at a better time. Here were change of scene, change of occupation, and a fine position, all to be had by a few strokes of my pen. Nothing, I said to myself, could have happened more opportunely. Must I, wasting in despair, die because a woman's fair? Certainly not. I would be editor of the *Calcutta Thunderer*. I would put all Europe between myself and Miss Carew. I would forget the past, begin a new life from this moment, and accept the twelve thousand rupees per annum.

Just as I came to this resolution, the first dinner-bell rang, and thrusting the letter into my pocket, I went down to the drawing-room.

I am not going to describe Lady Buchanan's dinner-party. It was superb and stupid, as country dinner-parties inevitably are, where half the guests are neighbouring rectors, and the other half hunting squires; where all the people come in weary and hungry from a twelve miles' drive; where the ladies eat nothing, and the gentlemen drink a good deal; and the conversation is divided between millinery and patent manure. I found an opportunity, however, of whispering my great news in Sir Geoffrey's ear, just before we went down to the dining-room; and when we rejoined the ladies after coffee, I found,

somewhat to my surprise, that Lady Buchanan, Mrs. Macpherson, and Miss Carew, knew all about it.

"I suppose we must congratulate you, Mr. Dundonald," said my friend's wife, making room for me on the sofa beside herself; "but you must condole with us. We are inconsolable at the prospect of losing you."

"You will forget your English friends," said Mrs. Macpherson, reproachfully.

"Not so soon, I fear, as my English friends will forget me," I replied. "Exiles have longer memories than they who stay at home among those they love."

"Then why do the exiles go away?" asked Miss Carew, with an indifferent smile. "Why do they not also stay at home with those they love?"

"The exiles, madam," I replied, "cannot always choose. It happens sometimes that they are poor; and foreign gold is better than none. And it sometimes happens that those whom they love do not love them."

"In which case, I presume, the foreign gold consoles them," laughed Miss Carew. "The pagoda-tree covers a multitude of sorrows, does it not?"

"I shall be better able to reply to that question twenty-five years hence," said I; "if I survive the rice and curry treatment so long."

"Five-and-twenty years hence!" repeated Lady Buchanan. "You surely do not mean to remain a quarter of a century in Calcutta?"

"I think it probable that, when I once settle in India, I shall be in no haste to return," I replied.

was all true; and, having made certain, sat down to consider what I ought to do.

Of course I must accept the appointment — I should be mad to refuse it. It was the greatest literary windfall that had ever tumbled into my lap; and it could not come at a better time. Here were change of scene, change of occupation, and a fine position, all to be had by a few strokes of my pen. Nothing, I said to myself, could have happened more opportunely. Must I, wasting in despair, die because a woman's fair? Certainly not. I would be editor of the *Calcutta Thunderer*. I would put all Europe between myself and Miss Carew. I would forget the past, begin a new life from this moment, and accept the twelve thousand rupees per annum.

Just as I came to this resolution, the first dinner-bell rang, and thrusting the letter into my pocket, I went down to the drawing-room.

I am not going to describe Lady Buchanan's dinner-party. It was superb and stupid, as country dinner-parties inevitably are, where half the guests are neighbouring rectors, and the other half hunting squires; where all the people come in weary and hungry from a twelve miles' drive; where the ladies eat nothing, and the gentlemen drink a good deal; and the conversation is divided between millinery and patent manure. I found an opportunity, however, of whispering my great news in Sir Geoffrey's ear, just before we went down to the dining-room; and when we rejoined the ladies after coffee, I found,

my heart overflowed with bitterness. She had scarcely spoken a dozen words, and even those were words of almost studied indifference. Had a stable-boy, or a mere hound of Geoffrey Buchanan's been in question, she would have expressed some faint interest in his fortunes. Common civility might be supposed to exact so much as that. And yet common civility had not prompted her to offer a syllable of congratulation or well-wishing, to a gentleman who had shown her every kind of social attention, who had certainly done nothing to merit her displeasure, and who had for nearly three weeks lived under the same roof, and eaten at the same table as herself.

"How does she take the news, Phil?" asked my friend, coming up to me, eagerly. "Does she seem sorry that you're going away."

"Sorry!" I echoed. "She cares as much about it as Gibson's Venus — or the Brittania on a five-pound note — or the lady in the lobster! To tell you the truth, Buchanan, I think she dislikes me; so the sooner I am gone the better!"

"It's impossible she should dislike you, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "How can she?"

I shrugged my shoulders, and tried to look as if I did not particularly care about it.

"What can she want better than a well-born, good-looking, clever young fellow like yourself, Phil?" pursued my friend, warmly. "Why she does not fly to you with open arms is surprising to me; but as to disliking you . . . I can't understand

"I am convinced that a man who desires to do well in life, must make up his mind to be stationary. A wanderer makes neither friends not fortune; and I should not wish to live without either."

"By the end of twenty-five years, I shall be old and grey, and a grandmother!" said Lady Buchanan.

"And I shall be old and yellow, and perhaps a grandfather," I replied.

"You must not marry in India, Mr. Dundonald!" cried Mrs. Macpherson, with a little scream expressive of horror.

"Why not, my dear madam?"

"Because the girls who go out are just those who have failed to find husbands at home. A man who marries in India is as badly off as a lady who goes into a country shop, and buys the fashions of last year!"

"I am much obliged to you for the caution," I replied, with mock gravity. "Perhaps, when I want a wife, you will kindly take the trouble to select and send one out to me. I shall be sure to like whatever pattern pleases you best, provided only the article be of the newest style, not faded, and warranted to wear."

"I shall be delighted to undertake your commission, Mr. Dundonald," said the widow, laughing; "and will do my best to give you satisfaction, you may depend."

With some jesting reply, I then rose, and walked away.

I had carried it off lightly and smilingly, but

my heart overflowed with bitterness. She had scarcely spoken a dozen words, and even those were words of almost studied indifference. Had a stable-boy, or a mere hound of Geoffrey Buchanan's been in question, she would have expressed some faint interest in his fortunes. Common civility might be supposed to exact so much as that. And yet common civility had not prompted her to offer a syllable of congratulation or well-wishing, to a gentleman who had shown her every kind of social attention, who had certainly done nothing to merit her displeasure, and who had for nearly three weeks lived under the same roof, and eaten at the same table as herself.

"How does she take the news, Phil?" asked my friend, coming up to me, eagerly. "Does she seem sorry that you're going away."

"Sorry!" I echoed. "She cares as much about it as Gibson's Venus — or the Brittania on a five-pound note — or the lady in the lobster! To tell you the truth, Buchanan, I think she dislikes me; so the sooner I am gone the better!"

"It's impossible she should dislike you, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "How can she?"

I shrugged my shoulders, and tried to look as if I did not particularly care about it.

"What can she want better than a well-born, good-looking, clever young fellow like yourself, Phil?" pursued my friend, warmly. "Why she does not fly to you with open arms is surprising to me; but as to disliking you . . . I can't understand

it — upon my soul, I can't. But there, who can understand a woman?"

"Who, indeed? — always excepting Œdipus and Monsieur de Balzac. Don't you want a fourth hand for a rubber?"

"Why, yes — but won't you prefer to stay with the ladies?"

"No, thank you. I prefer the whist-room to the drawing-room to-night."

And so I sat down with a deaf rector and a couple of county squires, and played long whist all the evening, in order that I might see no more of Miss Carew.

CHAPTER XI.

I ROSE early on the morning of the day fixed my departure, having passed an almost sleeps night, and being anxious to get away as ickly and quietly as possible. I was now more ger to leave Seaborough Court than I had been, ee weeks before, to accept Sir Geoffrey's ination. Nay, I would have given much to blot se three weeks from my life; for since that time foolish love had become an earnest passion, ich threatened to cast a shadow upon all my ure. I wished now that I had never come. I shed that I had never loved her. I wished that I d never seen her. I wished that I had never ard her name. There was no extravagance now out my passion. I neither soliloquised aloud, nor ote her name on the windows with my diamond g; nor made rhymes about her while I was aving, of a morning; nor indulged in dreams of s and storms, and deeds of brilliant valour. My e was past the effervescing stage, and had struck roots deep down into my very life.

"So much the worse for me!" thought I, as I ned out of my bed-room window that dewy, ny, early morning in July, and watched the lazy ell of the tide on the beach below. "Heigho! so ch the worse for me!"

And then I asked myself if this were really so — if, indeed, I were not a gainer, even in my disappointment and my sorrow? Saddened I was, and saddened probably for ever; but was I not, at the same time, sobered, exalted, purified? Should I not henceforth accept life in a more earnest spirit? Must I not, by reason of this very service of love which had cost me so dear, learn to do my share of world's work more worthily and completely than I had hitherto attempted to do it?

I questioned my heart earnestly and fervently; and the answer came without pause or prompting. I felt that I was both stronger and wiser; that I had now, for the first time, put on the *toga virilis;* and that I would, so far as I had power to will my own future, live a true life among my fellow-men.

With this feeling strong upon me, I seized pen and paper; wrote my acceptance of the Indian appointment; and expressed my intention of going by the Overland Route early in August, so as to reach Calcutta a clear fortnight before my duties should actually commence. This done, I packed my clothes and papers ready for travelling; and finding that it still wanted nearly two hours to breakfast-time, put my letter in my pocket, stole softly down the stairs, let myself out by a side-door, and took the road leading to the nearest post-town.

It was a long four miles to Yoxby, and the way lay mostly over a bleak moorland, rising in a succession of natural terraces, divided off here and there by low stone fences, and intersected by some of the worst roads I ever trod in my life. Large

flocks of sheep scattered over the wastes, and, now and then, a lonely farmhouse relieved the wide monotony; but it was a dreary walk, and I was not sorry when, having reached the village, and dropped my letter into the post-box, I turned back, and began descending once more towards the sea.

The way home seemed half as short again as the way out. The doubt, the uncertainty, the suspense of judgment, were all over now; and the very fact that it was too late to look back, brought a sense of relief with it. I repeated to myself, over and over again, as I strode along in the bright sunshine of the early morning, that I must henceforth think only of the duties which I had accepted — that in less than a month I should be on my way out — that before ten weeks had passed over my head I should be actually dwelling in the scene of my future labours — that, above and before all else, I must learn now to forget my hopeless, aimless, senseless love for Miss Carew!

It was half-past eight o'clock as I entered the lodge gates of Seaborough Court. The postman had ridden past me a few minutes before, and they had begun breakfast by the time I got in. Sir Geoffrey had just unlocked the post-bag and distributed its contents among his guests; those who had received letters were busy reading them; and my own were lying piled beside my plate.

"You're late this morning, Phil," said Sir Geoffrey, when I had exchanged the usual round of greetings, and dropped into my place.

"On the contrary, I am earlier than usual," I replied. "I have been over to Yoxby."

"On foot?"

"On foot — and I think I never remember to have taken so ugly a morning's walk."

"I should suppose not, indeed, Mr. Dundonald," said Lady Buchanan. "There is scarcely a tree between Seaborough and Yoxby, by the road. You should have kept to the coast, if you wanted beauty."

"I am afraid I was thinking more of business than beauty this morning," I replied; "and more of the post-box than of either."

"Of the post-box?" she repeated.

"Yes — I rose very early, and wrote an important letter, which I had a fancy to post with my own hands."

"Not the letter to Calcutta, Phil?" said Sir Geoffrey, looking up from his newspaper.

"Yes — the letter to Calcutta."

"Humph! Come to any decision?"

"Of course. I have accepted the appointment."

Sir Geoffrey looked grave, but said nothing. Lady Buchanan and Mrs. Macpherson broke into friendly lamentations. Miss Carew went on reading her letters, and appeared not even to hear what we were saying.

"I cannot congratulate you with any sincerity, Mr. Dundonald," said my friend's wife, "because I am so sorry you are going. We did not really believe that you would leave England, and all your friends."

"I can hardly believe it now," added Mrs. Macpherson.

"I think you should have allowed yourself a little more time for reflection," observed Sir Geoffrey.

"Horrid place, India!" ejaculated Captain Brewer. "You'd be in no hurry to go there, if you knew what it was like, I can tell you! Bad enough for soldiers; but worse for civilians. Vile climate — like living in an oven one half of the year, and in a showerbath the other!"

"Of course you are acquainted with Hindustanee," said the rector.

"Not with a single word," I replied.

"Oh, by George! you'll never get along without it!" exclaimed the dragoon.

"I really cannot see why. As editor of an English paper ...."

"May I ask what paper?" interposed the rector.

"The *Calcutta Thunderer*."

"An admirable publication — quite the best newspaper in Eastern India," said he, approvingly; "but I fear you will find the work tremendous."

"So much the better. I don't care how hard I work."

"Still I presume you do not wish to die in the shafts, like poor Guy Hamilton."

"Guy Hamilton?" I repeated, interrogatively.

"Have you not heard of him? He was one of your predecessors. I knew him quite well. He died literally from overwork, and anxiety of mind. A man cannot be editor, sub-editor, literary critic,

proof-reader, general manager, and author of all the leaders, with impunity."

"I should think not; but I am engaged as editor only."

"Precisely. He was engaged as editor only; and he had his staff under him, as you will have your staff under you; but permit me to tell you, my dear sir, that a literary staff in India is a mere broken reed for an editor to rest upon. The men are always ill, and gone up to the hills — or lazy, and decline to work. Poor Guy had often no brains but his own to depend upon, and the *Thunderer* proved his death at last. He was succeeded, I believe, by a Mr. Tunstall."

"Who is now about to retire," I replied.

"On a liver complaint, of course," added Captain Brewer.

"I think you are all very unkind to say these dismal things to Mr. Dundonald," said Lady Buchanan. "He has accepted the appointment, and posted his letter; and your evil auguries can now only serve to make him miserable."

I laughed, and shook my head.

"I flatter myself that I have, perhaps, a better constitution than my predecessors," I replied; "and, at all events, I am not in the least alarmed about my future. If the letter were neither written nor posted, I should both write and post it to-day, all the same."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey, dashing down his paper with a vehemence that almost made us jump. "Here's a piece of news! Lady Osnaburgh

is married to Fred Falconer — Falconer, the landscape painter."

"Not the widow of Viscount Osnaburgh?" said the rector.

"No other. What a wonderful match for Fred! A young fellow whom I've known ever since he was a boy. Why, it seems only yesterday that he came back from Rome!"

"Viscountess Osnaburgh is one of the richest widows in England, is she not?" asked Lady Buchanan.

"She's so rich, my dear," replied Sir Geoffrey, "that, like the princess in the fairy tale, she never speaks but the pearls drop out of her mouth."

"I never saw such diamonds as hers," said Mrs. Macpherson; "except Princess Torlonia's."

"The old viscount left her everything, you know," said the rector; "the Surrey and Sussex estates, Holkham Park, Osnaburgh Castle, the enormous Scotch property, the house in Piccadilly, the place at Cannes, the villas in Florence and Naples, and all that wonderful gallery of old masters that every one believed would go to the nation at his death! She was one of the greatest matches in Europe."

"And is one of the finest women in Europe, too," exclaimed the dragoon.

"Well, Falconer deserves his luck," said Sir Geoffrey. "A more upright, manly, honourable young fellow never handled a brush."

"I wonder how she came to know him," said Lady Buchanan.

"And I wonder how he dared to ask her!" I added.

"She asked him, you may depend on it," said Mrs. Macpherson.

"My dearest Julia!" cried Lady Buchanan, "how can you think anything so dreadful?"

"I don't see that it's dreadful at all," replied the widow, coolly; "and I'm sure it's extremely probable. Lady Osnaburgh is older than Mr. Falconer; of higher rank; and inconceivably rich. I can quite suppose that he would not presume to speak first. But you surely would not have two people made wretched for a point of ceremony?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "The common rules of etiquette don't apply to such exceptional cases as this."

"Wish she'd asked me—confound it!" muttered Captain Brewer.

"I once knew of a case in point," said Miss Carew, folding up her letter, and joining in the conversation for the first time.

"Where the lady popped the question to the gentleman?" laughed the rector.

"Not exactly that; but where the lady was obliged to let the gentleman understand that she would accept him, if he asked her."

"By Jove, though!" ejaculated Sir Geoffrey. "I should like to hear how she did it."

"I'm sure it was very unbecoming, however she did it!" said Lady Buchanan, with a little childish toss of her pretty head.

Miss Carew smiled somewhat gravely, and, after a moment's hesitation, said: —

"I will tell you, if you wish it; omitting names of course; and as the lady was an intimate friend of my own, I hope her conduct will not seem so very shocking, after all."

They all expressed their eagerness to hear, and Miss Carew, leaning her cheek, thoughtfully, upon her hand, thus began: —

"The inequality of position between my hero and heroine was, I should tell you, much less obvious than that between your Viscountess and her landscape painter. My heroine was neither very beautiful, nor very clever; but she was tolerably wealthy. My hero was very clever indeed, as well-born as herself; but poor. Neither had the lady the excuse of seniority. I fear she was quite as young as he, if not younger; so you see hers was a position of much greater difficulty than that in which we have supposed Lady Osnaburgh to be placed. There was, in fact, no valid reason why the gentleman should not have paid his court in the orthodox fashion; but he was either very proud, or very modest, for though he loved my friend with his whole heart, he would have died sooner than open his lips to tell her so. I have always thought, myself, that he was an exceedingly foolish young man, and not worth the trouble she took to cure him of his dumbness."

"I quite agree with you, Miss Carew!" said Sir Geoffrey, with a significant glance in my direction.

"The fellow who is afraid to ask a lady, does not deserve to win her."

I felt myself turn scarlet at this point-blank allusion; but, happily, my confusion passed unnoticed.

"But if he never told his love, how did the lady find it out?" asked the rector.

"At first through her woman's instinct, I suppose," replied Miss Carew; "but, later, by means of an indirect kind of anonymous declaration which he contrived to make to her."

"An anonymous declaration!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "I never heard of such a thing in my life."

"Miss Carew means that he sent the lady a Valentine," said the rector.

Miss Carew shook her head.

"No," she replied. "He sent her a book. I have told you that he was very clever; but I should also have told you that he was an author. He published an anonymous work, and dedicated it to her, also anonymously. That dedication was a declaration. I have a transcript of it in my purse, and will read it to you."

I had turned hot and cold, as she spoke these few last words; and now, as she took out the paper from her purse, a strange feeling, which I can only describe as a sort of rapturous terror, came upon me.

"It runs thus," said Miss Carew, and her voice trembled a little as she spoke: "*Madam, If I dared, I would lay these volumes at your feet, and entreat*

your gracious permission to ennoble them with your name; but, wanting the courage to address you, I venture only to do with them what I have already done with my heart, myself, and the few talents heaven has bestowed on me — dedicate them to you in silent homage, and suffer them to float down the stream of time as safely, or perilously, as chance may ordain!"

"Very pretty," said the rector. "Very well turned — very pretty indeed."

"So she thought."

"He signed his name to it, I hope?" asked Mrs. Macpherson.

"On the contrary, he took every imaginable pains to maintain his incognito."

"But she found the secret out at last?" said Lady Buchanan, now greatly interested.

"Yes, after many months."

"And she knew that he really loved her?"

"She knew it as well as any woman can know such a fact before she has been told it."

"My dear Miss Carew, she knew it as well as if she had been told it!" laughed Sir Geoffrey. "Women always find us out. Before we know our own minds, they sometimes know them for us! But I hope your heroine was as much in love as your hero, and accepted him at last?"

"How could she accept a man who would not ask her to do so?" cried Mrs. Macpherson. "Did he really never make any more direct avowal, Miss Carew?"

"Never."

"Then pray put us out of our suspense! Did she write to him?"

"No."

"Did she speak to him?"

"No."

"Did she fall ill, and send for him when she was dying?"

"No."

"Then, in heaven's name! what *did* she do?"

"I will show you. Can anyone lend me a pencil?"

Three or four pencils were immediately offered. Miss Carew took the nearest, and went on.

"Events took place," said she, "which threatened to separate them for ever. I am not at liberty to say what those events were; but, at all events, my hero and heroine were on the point of being parted for life, when they met one day at the house of a friend."

My heart throbbed painfully — I could scarcely breathe — I waited for her next words like a criminal for his sentence.

"It so happened," she continned, "that they were shown into the library, and that my hero's anonymous work was lying on the table. She took it up, as I may now take up this slip of paper, carelessly turning a leaf now and then, in the pauses of the conversation. You may imagine how he watched her, wondering silently if she had ever read his book, and never dreaming that she had penetrated the secret of its authorship!"

"Poor fellow! and his heart almost breaking, I daresay, the whole time!" exclaimed Lady Buchanan.

"Presently, when no one else was observing her, she took a pencil from the table, turned to the dedication-leaf; wrote one little word, thus, at the foot of the page; and closed the book. He thought she had corrected some trifling error of the press; but conceive what he felt when, later in the evening, he contrived to get possession of the volume, and read — this."

And Miss Carew, who had suited the action to the word, and written something on the transcript, handed the paper to Lady Buchanan.

"Read it aloud, my dear! read it aloud!" cried Sir Geoffrey. "What did she write on it?"

"Nothing but 'accepted.' Neither a word more nor a word less," replied his wife.

Accepted!

I looked at Miss Carew. She was very pale — pale even to her lips — but smiling still, and looking towards Lady Buchanan.

"I hope you do not blame her very much," she said, softly.

"I do not blame her at all, my dear," replied Lady Buchanan. "She did *not* make the gentleman an offer — she simply accepted him. It is not a case in point."

"Not in the least," said the rector. "I had hoped to hear that the lady went down on her knees, after the manner of the best male models, and tendered her hand and heart in the style of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes."

"I confess I had expected something more dramatic!" said Mrs. Macpherson.

"And I something more romantic," said Sir Geoffrey.

"But I did not promise you either a dramatic or a romantic story," replied Miss Carew; "so it is not my fault if you are disappointed."

"The lady's expedient was ingenious," said the rector.

"Yes; but there's a slightly commercial flavour about it that I don't altogether like," objected Sir Geoffrey. "It was more like accepting a bill than a lover."

They all laughed at this, and presently the breakfast-party broke up.

Half an hour later, I was standing beside her in the garden, telling her how I loved her. I know not what I said, or how I said it. I only know that the words came in an eager, burning, tumultuous torrent; and that she listened to them. At length I came to a pause, and implored her for an answer.

"What answer can I give?" said she, with a provoking smile. "Are you not going to India? And must I promise to wait twenty-five years for you?"

"I would not leave you for Paradise!" I exclaimed.

"Thank you," she replied, laughingly; "but it wouldn't be Paradise at all. It would be purgatory, if not the Inferno itself. I suppose I must accept

you, if only to save you from the '*Calcutta Thunderer*'!"

"I hope I shall not go mad with joy!" said I. "I think if I could only shout, or run a race, or fight somebody, it would do me good. For heaven's sake, give me something to do that will sober me!"

"With pleasure. You shall go forth, like a knight of old romance, to that undiscovered island where we had our memorable picnic, and fetch me the enchanted bundle of Waste Paper."

I covered my face with my hands, and groaned dismally.

"I may thank Buchanan for that humiliation!" I exclaimed. "But for his atrocious speech that evening, you would never have found me out."

"I beg your pardon," she replied. "I had found you out long before, and his words only confirmed my suspicions. I hope you mean to dedicate another book to me?"

"I mean to dedicate my life to you!"

"In how many volumes?"

"In as many as I may live to write."

"A sort of romantic Annual Register, in fact! But I will accept no more anonymous homage."

"My books shall be as the trees of Arden, carved all over with the name, not of Rosalind, but Helen! Nay, I will have no heroines henceforth that are not Helens!"

"Keep to that agreeable monotony, and you will have no readers either!"

"I should not care now, if I knew that every page I write henceforth —

'Should bind a book, should line a box,
Should serve to curl a maiden's locks.'

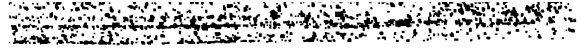
You are my public, and your approbation shall be my fame!"

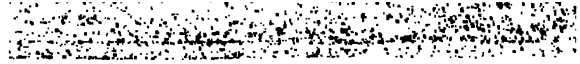
"Nay," said she, smiling, "I should not be content to look upon my husband's brain as a mere waste-paper factory. You must write no more for the grocer, Philip Dundonald."

"I will write for you, my beloved," I replied. "Only that which is good enough for all the world, is worthy of Helen Carew."

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.





August 1881.

Tauchnitz Edition.

Latest Volumes:

Asphodel. By M. E. Braddon, 3 vols.
Probation. By Jessie Fothergill, 2 vols.
Sunrise. By William Black, 2 vols.
Mrs. Mainwaring's Journal. By Emma Marshall, 1 vol.
Holidays in Tyrol. By Walter White, 1 vol.
Washington Square. By Henry James, Jr., 2 vols.
The Black Robe. By Wilkie Collins, 2 vols.
With Cupid's Eyes. By Florence Marryat, 2 vols.
Mary Marston. By George Mac Donald, 2 vols.
Todhunters' at Loanin' Head. By E. Lynn Linton, 1 vol.
A Tale of Sin. By Johnny Ludlow (Mrs. Henry Wood), 1 v.
A Sailor's Sweetheart. By W. Clark Russell, 2 vols.
Among the Hills. By E. Frances Poynter, 1 vol.
The Clerk of Portwick. By George Manville Fenn, 2 vols.
From Exile. By James Payn, 2 vols.
Madame de Sévigné, etc. By Miss Thackeray, 1 vol.
"My Love!" By E. Lynn Linton, 2 vols.
My Sister the Actress. By Florence Marryat, 2 vols.
Anne and other Tales. By Johnny Ludlow (Mrs. Henry Wood), 1 vol.
Ayala's Angel. By Anthony Trollope, 3 vols.
Donna Quixote. By Justin McCarthy, 2 vols.

GERMAN AUTHORS:

Brigitta. By Berthold Auerbach. From the German by Mrs. Clara Bell, 1 vol.

A complete Catalogue of the Tauchnitz Edition is attached to this work.

Bernhard Tauchnitz, Leipzig;
And sold by all booksellers.

THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

Harvard College Widener Library
Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-2413

WIDENER
MAY 07 1994
MAY 5 1994
BOOK DUE
CANCELLED

473 896